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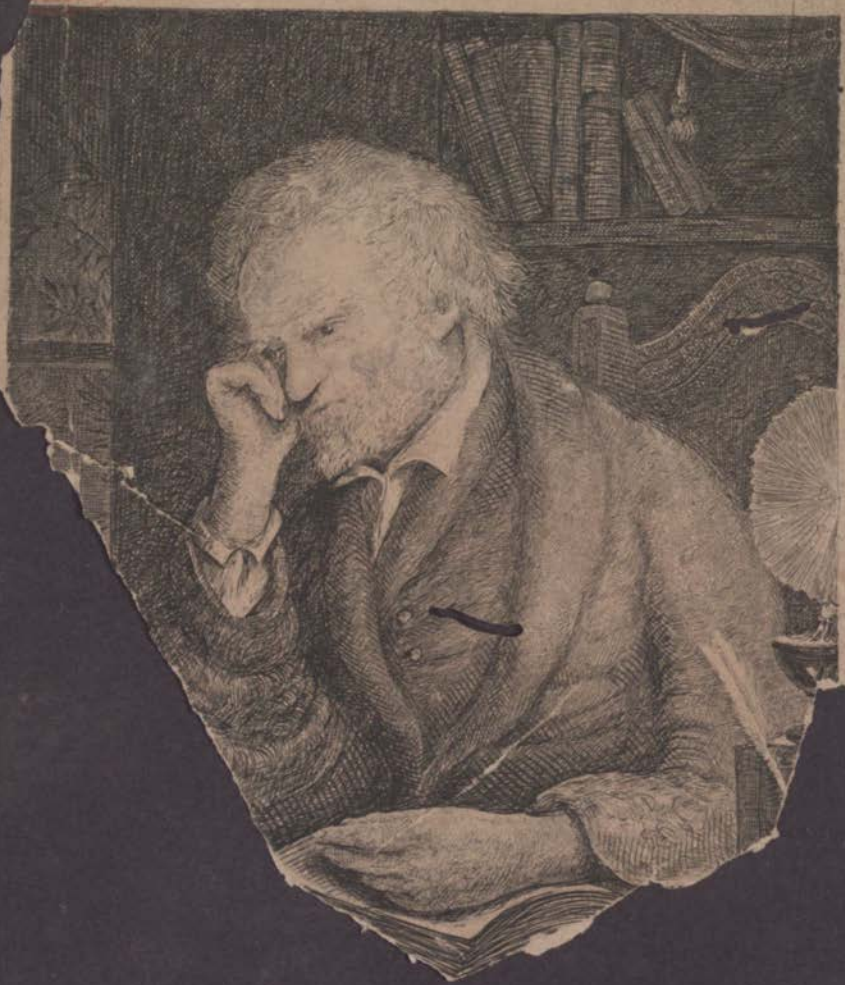

THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

TIMES, OPINIONS,

AND CONTEMPORARIES

OF

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES,

BART. K. J.

(Per legem terrae) Baron Chandos of Sudeley, etc.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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Most men
Are cradled into poetry from wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.
SHELLEY.

LONDON:
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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES,

BART.

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In November, 1800, died Lady Brydges' paternal uncle, Matthew Robinson, second Lord Rokeby, of Armagh, aged eighty-seven. He had succeeded his cousin, the first peer, who was primate of Ireland, in 1794. He was born in 1713, probably at York, or perhaps at Cambridge, where resided the learned Dr. Conyers Middleton, who had re-married his maternal grandmother, which lady was the heiress of the Morris's of Horton, near Hythe in Kent,—a seat which he finally himself inherited from his mother, and where he spent the greater part of his life, and breathed his last.

He was an eccentric, but a truly excellent and magnanimous character; on the course of whose life it is delightful and edifying to look back. The Robinsons settled at Rokeby in Yorkshire in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Thomas Robinson of Rokeby was killed in the civil wars, 1643, leaving several sons by Frances, daughter of Leonard Smelt, Esq., of Kirby-Hetham. William, the eldest son, was grandfather of William, whose eldest son, Sir Thomas Robinson of Rokeby, was created a baronet in 1730; and died without issue,

having sold Rokeby Park to Mr. Morritt. Richard, his younger brother, was promoted to the bishopric of Killala in 1751, and elevated to the archbishopric of Armagh, and primacy of Ireland, in 1764. In 1777 he was made an Irish peer, by the title of Lord Rokeby, with collateral remainders to his cousins, the Robinsons of Horton in Kent, who were descended from Sir Leonard Robinson, younger son of Thomas Robinson, by Frances, daughter of Leonard Smelt. The primate was a munificent public character, honoured and beloved; and dying at a great age in 1794, unmarried, the Irish peerage and English baronetage descended to Matthew Robinson of Horton, who thus became second Lord Rokeby. He was then at the age of eighty-one: he represented Canterbury in Parliament at the latter end of the reign of George II.; and was so much beloved and respected there to the last, that he had great influence on all elections: his younger brother Charles, recorder of Canterbury, was returned for that city, 1780 and 1784. He came into possession of the Horton estates about 1745; for his father lived till 1778, aged eighty-five.

When he took possession of Horton, he laid down a plan of life peculiar to himself. He resolved to be shackled by no ceremonies, but to pass his days in independence, according to what it seemed to him that nature pointed out: he kept no carriage; he never mounted a horse; he

allowed no liveries to his servants; but his housekeeping was bountiful, and his hospitality generous and large. He was a resolute and unbending Whig, formed on the principles of Algernon Sydney and Locke; and he carried his arguments much farther than in those days the people were accustomed to. Accustomed to think only for himself, he sometimes indulged in crude ideas, and his style was inelegant and harsh. He carried his hatred of the artificial through every thing; he took down his garden walls, and let his hedges drop, that his herds and flocks might have their full range. He hated the plough, and let his arable fields run to natural grass: so that his park became very large and picturesque, merely by letting it alone: he was skilful in the management of cattle, and, as his land was rich, his stock was fat and profitable.

He had some strange notions about money, and rarely put it out at interest: he kept a sum of money in gold for above fifty years in chests in his house, which, at compound interest, would have accumulated to £100,000; and he had at his death above £20,000 lying in the hands of different bankers, of which a great part had lain there for many years: he had also money in many of the continental banks. He had no faith in the public funds, and always predicted that they would break; a prediction which he contended was fulfilled when the bank was

restricted from cash-payments in 1797 ; yet it was not very reasonable to fear the national bank, and trust private banks. It must be admitted that he entertained some crotchets in his head.

His clothes were plain to a degree that many would call mean; and latterly he let his white beard grow down to his waist. He was a great walker, and stalked along with his staff, like an aged peasant. His voice was loud, but his manners were courteous, and he knew the world well. He was sagacious, manly, and uncompromising. He had a great contempt for provincial importance; and therefore was not in great favour with some of the neighbouring gentry, who knew not how to estimate that dignity of mind which despised those outward trappings of superiority on which they prided themselves. By the yeomanry and peasantry he was adored as their protector and benefactor.

He was a great reader, but not of works of imagination. His taste turned to politics, voyages, and travels. As he loved plainness, so he did not relish the more refined parts of literature. He was the reverse of his father, who was never happy out of the high and polished society and clubs of London, and thought a country life a perfect misery. The father and son were not very fond of one another, and each was angry at the other's taste.

In every thing Lord Rokeby was manly and

straightforward: he had no dark and hidden passions: he was free from the slightest taint of envy or jealousy: he was nobly generous, while he knew the full value of money; so much so as to appear to superficial observers miserly. His very simple and humble dress was mistaken by many for avarice.

When now and then some stranger of rank came into the country, and paid him a visit through curiosity, founded on the absurd rumours of his eccentricities and hermit-life, he was surprised to meet with a man, though singular in his dress, yet a man of the world in his manners and conversation; ready, acute, easy, and full of good sense, with a power of sarcastic dignity which put down the smallest attempt at impertinence or misapprehension.

He retained his faculties to the last; and I believe had enjoyed his earthly being altogether more than any other person I could name. He had an estate in Yorkshire as well as Kent, of which I do not know the exact extent, and of which he never raised the rents; and he might have died immensely rich in personal property if he had made interest of his money.

He was a striking contrast to his sister, the celebrated Mrs. Montagu of Portman Square, the author of the "Essay on the Genius of Shakspeare," who died in August, 1800, three months before him, at the age of eighty. She was a woman of brilliant

imagination and acquirements, and lived all her days in the full tide of high life, of which it was her weak vanity to be too fond. Her husband and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's husband were first-cousins. Her mind had had literature infused into it from her childhood by Dr. Conyers Middleton, who was married to her grandmother. She had formed an early friendship with the old Duchess of Portland, the heiress of the Harleys. Her wit and fund of observation, sentiment, and reflection, showed themselves in her letters, from her earliest years: but all her ambition was to shine amid the highest ranks of society; and this induced her to marry a man of a noble family, splendidly allied,—though many years older than herself.

She was good-natured, generous, candid, and obliging: but her vanity and love of flattery made her sometimes not quite sincere. No one knew characters better;—she saw a foible in an instant, but she generally forbore to expose it. The fault of her letters is, that she was too ambitious of being witty and rhetorical; so that one is not always sure what were her sincere opinions. There was a littleness in her extreme and ostentatious vanity, very unworthy of her. She was acquainted with all the great literary men of her day, and had her house open to them; but her most intimate friend was George Lord Lyttelton. She had the talent of drawing

the characters of those eminent men whom she knew; and it is a subject of deep regret what has become of her best letters; for those published are assuredly the worst. Her correspondence was inexhaustibly voluminous. Some one asking about her nephew, a noble lord of some wit answered:—"He!—why, he is only fit to darn his aunt's blue stockings!"—He is gone to his fathers; and this may now be related as an innocent anecdote.

Mrs. Montagu was too fine a lady, really to reconcile herself to the manners of Dr. Johnson; and she could not forgive his contemptuous "Life of Lord Lyttelton." Johnson revenged himself by occasionally speaking of her in a disparaging manner: but he was very inconsistent on this subject: sometimes he spoke of her,—or at least to her,—with a flattery approaching to the fulsome. I find in Miss Reynolds's "Recollections of Johnson," annexed to Croker's edition of Boswell's Life of this extraordinary man, vol. v. p. 394, the following passage:—

"This brings to my remembrance the unparallelled eulogium which the late Lord Bath made on a lady he was intimately acquainted with, in speaking of her to Sir Joshua Reynolds. His lordship said that he did not believe that there ever was a more perfect human being created, or ever could be created, than Mrs. Montagu. I give the very words I heard from Sir Joshua's mouth;

from whom also I heard that he repeated them to Mr. Burke,—observing, that Lord Bath could not have said more:—'And I do not think that he said too much,' was Mr. Burke's reply. I have also heard Dr. Johnson speak of this lady in terms of high admiration."

Her "Essay on Shakspeare,"—though some have affected to despise it,—is a very eloquent and beautiful piece of criticism, which none but an author of great genius could have produced. She would have been a very useful, brilliant, and copious author, if she had not been diluted by worldly ambition.

Her sister, Mrs. Scott, who died in 1795, the author of the "Life of d'Aubigné," had great literary talents and vast information, especially in history; but she had not the liveliness, wit, and imagination of Mrs. Montagu.

The Rev. William Robinson, younger brother of Lord Rokeby and Mrs. Montagu, was born about 1726 or 1727. He was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and had a great turn for literature, which perhaps he partly imbibed from Dr. Conyers Middleton, where it is probable he formed his first intimacy with Gray the poet, whose friendship he retained till that amiable author's lamented death in 1771. About the year 1765 his friend Mrs. Cœlia Scott (one of the family of Scott's Hall) gave him the small rectory of Denton, near Canterbury; and when

he came to reside there, he rented of her the old mansion, which she obtained by devise from Captain Whorwood, R. N. About the same time his father had purchased for him of the Shrewsbury family the next presentation to the rich rectory of Burfield, near Reading, Berkshire. Here he died in December, 1803, aged about seventy-seven. He was an excellent scholar, and Gray had a very high opinion of his taste. He is noticed in Gray's letters about 1767, where Gray gives to Dr. Wharton an account of a visit he paid to him at Denton. He was an indolent man—of polished manners, but sometimes apparently slow and dreamy,—till a little provoked, when he became sharp and contradictory;—now and then, a little humorsome and petulant; liberal and violent in his political principles;—unaffected; a despiser of show, and impatient of artifice. He was a lover of the arts, and very well versed in them. He had travelled in Italy, and was an excellent judge of pictures. In literary composition his taste was severe; and he loved plainness so much, that one of his favourite authors was Dr. Franklin. He was a handsome man,—something above the middle height,—but rather clumsily made. With great seeming humility, he was rather proud, and fired like his brother at the smallest liberty taken with him. He married a lady with a good fortune, and, receiving part of the estates of his eldest brother by will in

1800, died rich. Lady Brydges is his youngest daughter.

From what I have said, it will be clear that those Robinsons of Horton and Rokeby have been endowed with faculties which have entitled them to a distinction not very common. Where will a family be found which has produced so brilliant a star as Mrs. Montagu?

My uncle was a sportsman to the last, and my father had been so. In this respect their taste was not congenial with that of their neighbour, Mr. Robinson, who had an aversion and contempt of these amusements. But as their houses were scarcely half a mile asunder, they associated continually together, and the children of the two families were always playfellows. The politics of the gentlemen also disagreed: my father and uncle were not such ultra-Whigs as Mr. Robinson.

The family of Hammond of St. Alban's Court in Nonington, of whom the grandfather of the present possessor of that estate married my mother's elder sister, had been established there for above two centuries. They had allied themselves well in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. with the ancient and honourable families of Aucher and Digges, and had been knighted by King James I. James Hammond, the elegiac poet, was grandson of Anthony, a younger son of this house. Their more immediate ancestor, William,

elder brother of this Anthony, published a volume of very rare poems, which I reprinted some years ago. His grandmother's brother was George Sandys the poet; and one of the daughters of this family was the mother of Thomas Stanley the poet, the learned editor of Æschylus, &c. My aunt Hammond died in 1770, and her husband in 1773; their eldest son in 1821, aged seventy. It is an extraordinary circumstance of this family of Hammond, that they had been tenants of this estate, which was an appendant grange to the Abbey of St. Alban's, before the dissolution of religious houses.

St. Alban's Court is about five miles distant from Wootton; and there was a continual intercourse between us,—not always perhaps entirely cordial; for my mother's sister was an imperious, impatient, envious woman, and her husband very weak and shy. The Hammond blood was full of provincial prejudices, and thought the race of Aucher and Digges greater than all the historic lustre of all the Egertons. The late Mr. Hammond had many generous and ductile qualities, and was altogether good-natured, though fretful; but was not very wise. By a lucky marriage he restored the fortune of the family, which had been long decaying. Mr. Payter, whose sister was mother of Sir Herbert Taylor, married the late Mr. Hammond's sister; and Sir Herbert's sister is mother of Mrs. Stanley, wife of

the present very distinguished secretary of the colonial department,

I have thus gone through a course of names which have connected themselves with literature and history:—with any others I am reluctant to fill these pages: provincial antiquity is respectable and useful in its own limits. I would preserve them for the sake of the peasantry round them; but they are not fitted to interest general readers.

I believe they call a provincial horse, not known on the great arena of Newmarket, a blind horse, whose pedigree and history may be falsified without easy detection: so it is with provincial families; but this cannot be done with names known in literature and history.

But it may be said that if one in his own person arrives at a just distinction, what signifies it if he is the first of his name or blood who has done so? Is it not rather the more merit in him? But do we not give easier credit to blood already eminent? Do we not yield to the superiority with less reluctance? Do we not think it more probable that our favourable judgment is right? It is said we "war not with the dead;"—so it is with those to whom our ancestors have submitted;—there is not the same jealous and painful rivalry of them. Thus we bow to old nobility, but are irritated at new.

Brutal beings without mind know nothing but

actual wealth and actual rank in possession at the moment: they cannot look to the past or the distant; they can see nothing in reflected light. On them therefore such memorials of those who are gone to the grave make no impression: they make an estimate by the same rules of themselves as of others. If pressed by poverty or obscurity, they have no elevation of spirit to support themselves by retrospect.

What is among the main inducements to toil for fame and respect? Is it not to place our posterity in a state to command regard? Is it not the principle of all government to carry rewards down to the descendants of those who deserve well of their country? Many say that there can be nothing in blood to confer moral or intellectual virtue. Some have sprung up into splendour without it; and on many it has been thrown away. Some it makes lazy, and some it lulls to indulge in vice; but still the chances are in its favour.

But here are the facts: let the reader make what comments he chooses upon them. If he considers them dry and barren facts, he may pass lightly over them. If he thinks that they are coloured or exaggerated, let him show that they are so. If he says that he already knows them, his memory will not be much troubled by the recognition.

All these, however, may perhaps be light and superfluous considerations, except to those who

are idle and at ease. With many the pressing calls and anxieties of life are too numerous to leave room for them. The evils incident to humanity are indeed frightfully great. Few have seen more of them than I have. I am not apt to despond, but sometimes my courage gives way; and then I grow feeble, and my mind and body prey upon each other. I dose in languor, rather than sleep; and when I sleep, I find no refreshment from it.

See the villany of the world: see what use has been made by lawyers and agents, of the princely estate of Thellusson! They have actually for above thirty years eat up the whole income within a few hundreds! What dependence is there on courts of law, or of parliament, when they did not set aside that most wicked and insane will? It was in part to prevent and crush the canvass that was going on in the upper house in 1803, to set aside that horrible will, that the thunder of the house was denounced upon the silly circular letter of the Chandos claimant. In the Thellusson case they were not so foolish as to print a circular, and therefore could not be attacked in a direct way. But I have seen as much of the villany of lawyers, though not upon so great a scale, as the Thellusson heirs.

What have the courts been about that they did not check these rapacities? Were there no masters to tax costs? But perhaps the charges were

of a nature which did not come within a master's jurisdiction. The truth is, that all these harpies favour one another. I have found that lawyers take from seventy-five to ninety per cent on an average; sometimes as high as eight hundred per cent: viz. their charges have been about £2300 for what, when taxed, the legal charge was only £331. 7*s.* 6*d.*; and taken the greater part of it in advance too! stopping it out of money passing through their hands. In twenty years they have thus taken nearer £100,000 than £50,000 from me and mine; their regular law-charges alone amounting to upwards of £2500 a year, and under the name of what they call their cash-payments —many of which were no payments at all— nearly as much. In no other country of the world are there, or ever have there been, such abuses of this kind as in England.

I am told that General John, Earl of Bridgewater, made an attempt at a will, something of the nature of Thellusson's. I was at Geneva at the time of his death, and have not seen that will. He was a very weak, proud, and offensive man. I knew a little of him from the time I was a child, but never found any good in him. With all the immense wealth of his latter days he was proverbially mean in money matters. When I first knew him he was a cornet of dragoons.

CHAPTER II.

Gibbon's "Autobiography" — His vanity and foibles—Some of his characteristics—His family—Randolph, the American President—Uselessness of collateral relationship — The author's love of independence—His contempt of modern nobility—The bitter prejudices it draws on him — Jews and attornies — Inefficacy of ill-founded abuse—Wickedness of anonymous attacks—The world has too much sagacity to be long deceived — Charlatanism — What knowledge is valuable—Literature necessary to a polished society—Temporary fame — Permanent merit — Thurlow and Rosslyn contrasted with Gibbon and Robertson — Fame justly allotted after death — Artificial rules of composition condemned — Genius must not work by model — Gray sometimes too laboured — The author's fate to be thwarted and damned with faint praise — Accused of querulousness —Has never been idle—Success the world's test of merit—But the world gives success to craft and impudence—The record of opinions the proper subject of literary biography—The task perilous—Merit no security against criticism—Truth not interesting if trite—Injury of self-delusion—Uses of solitude—Vexations of society—Conceit of the busy—Literature too much carried on by management and cunning—No trust to be put in the advice of others—Elevation of thought—Baseness of petty watchfulness—A mean compliance with the world not necessary — Exhortation to perseverance—Various minds must rely on various merits — Humiliation of being a cipher — Author's desire to make a sober estimate of his own works—Has written in all humours—Does not look back with shame on what he has done.

GIBBON had not the courage to give to the world his "Autobiography" during his life. He was a

wonderful man, but he had many vanities and some weaknesses. Colman has given a curious portrait of him, as inserted in a note of Croker's "Boswell." Rich as he was in erudition, and surely in genius,—for what but genius could have put together in so luminous a manner such an incredible extent of chaotic materials?—he yet was in his manners and person a finical coxcomb. He lived in an age of ceremonials, which have now passed away; and he had a silly desire to be thought a man of fashion and fine gentleman—a mean ambition for a man of such a splendid and accomplished mind. But these little passions were superseded by more noble ones; and he retired with an elevated courage to Lausanne to spend his latter days in literature and his own thoughts, and the beautiful scenery of Switzerland, and on the banks of the sublime Genevan lake. His "Memoirs" are pleasing, and will always be an instructive record of indefatigable literary toil; but they are not to my taste of the highest class of memoirs; they partake a little of the quaintness of the author's manners. He appears too much in his full dress. They want energy, and simplicity, and frankness, and high bursts of eloquence. His father appears to have been a vain man, of feeble resolution, and morbid feelings. He was himself vain of his birth; but he knew little of the history of his family beyond his grandfather: his great-grandfather having moved

out of Kent, where all his ancestors had lived, the link was nearly lost. When young, I suppose he had no curiosity about those things, for my father, when he dined at Wootton, about 1761, could have given him the whole history. He would have been interested by the story of the derivation of old John Randolph, the American President, whose death has been announced within the present month (July, 1833).* I do not recollect that the historian mentions the connexion of his family with the Yorkes, of whom he would have been justly proud. Charles Yorke, who died at the moment of accepting the seals of chancellor, 1770, was a man of beautifully intellectual character. Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's mother was, as I have said before, a Gibbon, and the widow of my great-grandfather Edward Gibbon, who was her cousin. I have a few letters of Charles Yorke to my father, but they are of no importance.

As to collateral relationship, it is, except as an object of curiosity, of no value whatever. I know nothing personally of collateral relations, and do not desire to know them. I never received a civility from them, and would not cross the road to bow to them.* I glory in my

* See the notes to my poem on "The Lake of Geneva." Geneva, 1831. 2 vols. 8vo.

independence: I never yet sought the acquaintance of any one. I frankly confess that I consider the greater part of the modern nobility to be insolent *parvenus;* and, consequently, I desire not to have any communication with them. This is one of those confessions which, I am aware, will give great offence; but I have received injuries from them which can never be repaired; and so has Lord Banbury. It is clear, from what Lord Redesdale said, in what spirit they judge of old claims. No one can forget how they received Lord Byron.

I prepare myself for violent and bitter attacks; sarcasm, detraction, misrepresentation, and ridicule will be at work. Vanity, conceit, false pretension, spleen, and envy will be imputed to me: I shall be blackened by the corrupt emissaries of modern wealth; and all the Jews and attornies in England will set up one loud and yelling clamour against me, like the bellowing cry of kenneled hounds in an angry uproar. And they would, if they could, eat me up too, and tear me limb from limb as they tear up a beast of prey!

But ill-founded abuse and malignant criticism finally defeat themselves. If these could destroy, what statesman could live? Living poets too, of great fame and lustre, have been covered with bitter censure and ridicule,—and yet they sur-

vive! If Nature has given me any faculties above the common, cruel vituperation cannot take them away; if she has denied them, forbearance cannot bestow them on me.

The assassin who stabs in the dark, in the mask of an anonyme, deserves no mercy. His cruel cowardice proves him to be the worst species of demon. Sometimes he uses a poisoned weapon from malice, and sometimes for hire. The business of just criticism is to expose charlatanism,—not to degrade an enemy or a rival. Dulness may be left to itself: it will sink by its own weight. If what I have written is trite or foolish,—if my sentiments are mean or affected,—if my facts are trifling or inaccurate,—if my language is heavy and vulgar, — then I must submit to the fate which these faults deserve. But I will not yield to the sentence of false and unqualified judges; nor of prejudiced, ill-humoured, and base judges.

There is a sound sagacity in the world which it is impossible long to deceive. Nothing but folly can entertain the hope of a successful deception; and it is extraordinary that charlatanism should ever succeed for a time. But it often has its reign, though a transient one. This must be effected by the cry of the mob before reason has had an opportunity to be heard. There is no doubt that false and factitious beauties often catch the mob.

Is a charlatan conscious of his charlatanism? Perhaps not always, but generally. He can scarcely be ignorant of the use of tricks and artifices. He knows whether he seeks truth, or only plausibility: he knows whether he writes from conviction, or only for show. His business is to say what is true, yet in some degree recondite—what, if said before, has not been so well said, or requires to be revived. Whence does such knowledge come? It does not come from books, for that is already before the public; it comes from the fountain of the brain, which draws its resources from within. But may not memory supply what we believe to be our own? In some minds this self-deception may take place; in others not. Innumerable books are published without a single idea taken from the native spring of the author's own mind. But are not borrowed thoughts better than the author's own, if crude and erroneous? The answer is, that neither of them ought to be endured.

There are those who are under the dominion of a passion for book-making. If they have no inborn powers, it is a very foolish and troublesome passion. It encumbers shelves, weakens attention, degrades literature, and withdraws funds which ought to be reserved to support genius and merit.

But a polished society could scarcely exist without literature: they who do not read, or read

little, derive knowledge and refinement of thought indirectly from literature, because it enriches conversation, and gives it more precision as well as more elegance. There can be no dependence on what is not written; it is fugitive and elusive.

The fame of men, of whose minds the fruits are spent upon their contemporaries, soon dies: of excellent authors the labours are permanent, and increase in value and reputation with time. Make the comparison in what degree of liveliness exists the memory of Johnson and Burke at this day, when set against that of Pitt and Fox! Compare Lord Chancellor Thurlow, Lord Rosslyn, or even Lord Mansfield, with Gibbon or Robertson! Even Cumberland is still familiar to us; while Lord North, to whose greatness he looked with such humble reverence, is fading fast from our recollection;—while Goldsmith, who lost his presence of mind before the pompous splendour of the first Duke of Northumberland, lives on every one's lips at the time when the forgotten duke is entombed in peerage-books. "But," says the dull and mean materialist, "let us live while we live, and when our bones are mouldering in the dust, need we care what becomes of memory and adulation? When we repose in the cold earth we shall not hear the voice of Fame, let it sound as loud as it will."

There is a stern justice, by which they who have aspired to fame will be measured when they

are dead. Spiteful critics will no longer attack them, nor the *clique* of party-prejudice protect and exalt them. During life interested leaders give the tone, and the indiscriminating multitude slavishly repeat. But adventitious recommendations and technical merits will, when the body descends to the grave, no longer inspirit the relics. What is formed of dying matters will die with its enclosure.

It is hateful to hear critics talk about artificial rules of composition, as if a literary production was a piece of joinery or cabinet-work! What signifies a cold correctness, a laboured method, a finish, which, while you cannot find fault with it, you sleep over? When an effusion is all fire and eloquence, "O, it is very well!" they cry; "full of spirited things and a vigorous originality; but it is not done in a workmanlike way." These are men who want to make literature a piece of mechanism! It is the business of genius

> To snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.

Genius is not to work by models; the same rules and processes will not apply to different minds. It is lucky that they will not, for what is so attractive as variety? Like the diversified style of Burke, from the most pithy brevity of a few words to sentences as long as a page, and from a familiar and unadorned diction to the highest degree of poetical splendour and sublime imagery!

There are subjects necessary to be treated with a perfect clearness of method, and a logical precision of argument; but is this necessary or proper upon all occasions?

There is no doubt that Gray laboured some of his compositions too much, and that this often rendered him abrupt and obscure, and the train of his ideas interrupted, so that the reader cannot follow them without great pains, and without the aid of notes. This is an essential fault in poetry, and absolutely destroys eloquence, which, if it cannot carry the reader or hearer simultaneously along with it, fails in its purpose. Toil and correction always break the natural train of ideas; and what it requires toil to write, it requires toil to understand. Dull men do not like to hear of this, and always dispute it with spleen and spite.

From my very boyhood every thing has been done to thwart me, and to prevent the pursuits to which nature inclined me. Where was the cheer? I never heard it: but I had to encounter cold, freezing, palsying looks; and every one knew how to

> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer!

These assertions will be deemed very querulous; but if they are true, the epithet is not applicable to them. Some like to boast of the

favours they have received, and the flattery which has been heaped upon them: they think it recommends them, while they put every insult into their pockets, and smile upon the insolent or the malignant who spit upon them. They do not hate the less in their hearts: while smiles are without, poison is within. Anger vents itself by speaking out; but nursed inwardly, it is destruction.

There are those who will observe, that if I have not been cheered, it was because I did not deserve cheers. My only reply to this is, "*Meâ virtute me involvo.*" I know that I have not been idle; and I know that my love of literature has been ardent and pure. It is strange if in so many years of inexhaustible toil I have always failed.

But many, perhaps the great mass of mankind, cannot be persuaded that there can be any other satisfactory proof of merit than success. They worship success by whatever means it is acquired; and neglect and persecution they take to be sore evidences of worthlessness. Providence allows this ungenerous ignorance, and these cruel wrongs, to go on in this world: since the fall of man, craft and fraud, or audacious impudence, will always carry the day; and simple desert may go in rags and starve.

The base cannot be brought to think that there is any other happiness or power than in money, and therefore they will attempt to get

money in whatever way they can; nor will their conscience restrain them from any thing, however wicked, which they can do with impunity.

Let not the censorious reader pronounce the record of these opinions to be irrelevant to my subject. If the autobiography of a literary man is allowable, the register of his opinions must necessarily form his principal aim. The rectitude of those opinions is submitted to intelligent thinkers and observers. In a general book of literature, these may be general; where the subject is the life of an individual, these also must be individual. The task is perilous. If the thoughts want justness, sagacity, and depth, the effect will be that the memorialist exposes, instead of recommending, himself. And this he is sure to do if he has not the talent, of which his belief or conceit induces him to undertake the task.

Not that all the talent and genius in the world will secure him from criticism and cavil. There are hundreds who live upon the bitter food of objection, censure, and malice; they draw their subsistence from furnishing these stimulants to the corrupted appetites of others. But *magna est veritas, et prævalebit!* I believe that nothing can counteract the final triumph of truth. But if there be a want of soundness, then the spear of acute criticism blows up the deception.

But sound truth will not do, if it be trite or

dully told—if it throws out no light! A warmth of style, and a force of expression, are necessary. There must be a selection of topics, and a novelty and happiness of combination. The vigorous ingredients must not be intermixed and diluted with tedious inanities. If there be expansion, it must not be stretched to feebleness. All must be at once luminous, transparent, and strong.

If there be a self-delusion in an author, which prompts him to venture without these qualifications, he will do himself an injury; but perhaps not an unendurable injury. He may be only confounded with those whom criticism often attacks so virulently without the smallest pretence; and thus the chances are that he will console himself. We love fame, and Providence has instilled this passion into us for wise purposes; but we can do without it. It is, as it has been so often called, but a bubble. It has no substance,—it will not supply life,—it is nothing in solitude. Men of fame are often nothing but puppets of straw, whom a touch of fire will consume.

In solitude a man is lord of himself; he may defy the malign caprice of the multitude; and if he feels the defiance in his own conviction, the evil dominion over him is gone. To worship the seeming great of the world, is a baseness of which there is no hope. Many of them are

the weakest as well as the most contemptible of beings. All the grounds on which they build their title to distinction are false. Their haughty reserve is nothing but a trick to hide their emptiness. They use forms to keep off approach, knowing that they cannot bear a near inspection.

There is so much vexation in society to him who is too virtuous to bend to it, that it is far better to keep out of it. In that state the greater part of the weapons of malice cannot reach us. But how are we to employ ourselves? Do we love literature? Is not half the interest and use of literature thus taken away? Do we forego the spur of a just and spiritual fame? The more we influence from "the loop-holes of retreat," the more sure we are of our power. It is a favourable self-estimate, on which much of our happiness depends. We find means to persuade ourselves that in the deepest seclusion we may be of some importance.

The busy ones who do the work of society may think themselves the ablest and the wisest, but it is surprising to what ignorant and foolish heads and hands the management of human affairs is committed! Johnson makes the same remark, speaking of the late Lord Rosslyn, who was a perfect charlatan. This shows how much more effectually artifice and craft will produce individual success in life, than genius, talent, and knowledge.

Almost all literature is carried on by management and cunning. Most of the literary journals pander to a political party: they have other objects in view than to give an impartial judgment on literature. Countenance is to be given to authors who support certain doctrines, and they who repudiate them are to be depreciated. For this purpose very stupid men are often lauded, and great ones vilified.

If we disapprove the world and yet cannot alter it, is it wise to struggle with it? Let it go its own way, and let us go ours. But who can guess to what irreparable evils one erroneous step may lead? One may do wrong by his own judgment; but if he is to be guided by the opinion of another, what hope is there that he will do wisely? Gibbon speaks of the danger of advice: who, even if he be sincere, can enter into all the circumstances and feelings of another's situation? But not one in ten is sincere in the opinion he gives. He who takes an important step at the suggestion and pressure of another, is commonly lost. A ductile mind is always in danger of this; but, on the other hand, a blind self-opinion, carried to obstinacy, is worse.

Elevation of thought and sentiment is a primary gift, which is entitled to respect and admiration. It proves itself best in adversity, and is a sort of charm which keeps off taint and contumely. But we cannot be entirely spiritualized; our

earthly part must still be subject to earthly wants. Food and raiment, and a roof over our heads, are still indispensable. So far we are subject to the tyranny of human injustice and wickedness.

There is a destiny hangs over us: we are not entirely our own masters, and cannot carve for ourselves. It is cruel to lay, in every case, a man's non-success at his own door. There are often circumstances, not at his command, to which almost any other would have been a victim. They who are at their ease, and have never been put into peril, may talk very calmly and very sapiently; or may shake their heads with a hypocritical appearance of regret when they are secretly exulting in their hard hearts!

There is a baseness in that petty watchfulness and cunning fitted to carry one safe through the world which is loathsome! It is the instinct of an animal; not the wisdom of mind. Yet none have such conceit of their own good sense as these poor creatures. They smile with contempt upon the errors and misfortunes of genius and generosity.

It will be exclaimed, "We must live in the world as it is, and accommodate ourselves to its humours; and those are mischievous pursuits which are at war with it." Do such mean and immoral sentiments as these deserve a reply? We are to battle with the fool, the vicious, and the

devil. We are to seek abstract wisdom and purify the mind, come what will. But here comes another fight to maintain: we shall be attacked upon the ground we have chosen, and told we have no title to it.

Let him who has dedicated his life honestly to literature persevere. Who are they that attack him? Who has placed them upon the judgment-seat? What are their own pretensions to excellence? They are not the *élites* of intellect—the beings of a higher order. If he is bold and firm, he will, should nature have been bountiful, rise in defiance of them.

It is not necessary that to make an author of merit there should be every varied kind of excellence. There have been such authors, but their rarity is extreme. All that is required is superiority in some line of intellect which qualifies him to instruct or to please. If he blunders on through a mist of ideas in which he does not see his own way clearly, it were better to throw down the pen. He can gain no honour; and his labour is all lost. He toils but to show his own weakness and put his readers to sleep. If by the force of an original mind he can put his subject in a light of ingenious novelty, which, if not positively true, at least deserves consideration, he will entitle himself to an attention which will deserve notice, and be useful to others.

There is no thought so humiliating as to con-

sider oneself a useless incumbrance among one's fellow-beings; to live as a cipher, and to die without being regretted or missed. One struggles to perform a part which few, if any, others can perform; and draw off the veil from truth on points which few others have skill to clear away.

I often task myself to consider whether any literary work I have done is worth the time it has cost. I am willing, for the sake of self-complacence, to persuade myself that my labour has not been altogether uselessly spent: but I have generally doubts, and am never quite satisfied. Though I would wish to encourage and convince, I would not delude myself. I look back sharply, sternly, and anxiously on what I have done. I examine whether I have related what is worth knowing, and what is not elsewhere to be found. I scrutinize whether it has any traits of affectation, or insincerity, or inconsistency; whether it is crude, or feeble, or borrowed, or superfluous; whether the thoughts are obscure, or the language is vulgar. For inequalities or hasty expressions I care not.

I have written in all humours, and with every sort of rapidity; in deep grief; in overwhelming misfortune, in indignant rage, in disappointment, in danger, and in destitution. Altogether I persuade myself that I have nothing to be ashamed of, or to repent. With harassed powers, and in mere despair, I have no doubt written some

things too slightly; and I am accused too much in *currente calamo:* but, with only one exception, whatever of mine the public has least disapproved, has been written most hastily.

CHAPTER III.

Death of Mr. Maxwell in 1818—His father and mother—The happy days the author spent in his society—His intellectual and moral character—Mrs. Maxwell, the author's sister—Her sad death by an accident—Her person and character—The author's cordial agreement with Mr. Maxwell—His seat at Ewshot—Moor Park—His neighbours the St. Johns, of Dogmersfield—Their character—Mr. Lefroy, husband of the author's eldest sister—His birth and character—His hospitality—Mrs. Lefroy; her beautiful character, her attractions, and poetical genius—Her disastrous death by a fall from her horse—The Austens, neighbours of the Lefroys—Jane Austen, the novelist—The author has lived little with *literati*—Their deficiency of conversation — Advantages of frankness — Charles Fox—A lover of literature—Pitt no poet—Raleigh, Wotton, and Burleigh—Defects in parliamentary debates—Canning—Apology for the author's rambling in his subjects—He follows natural associations—Charms of Boswell's "Johnson"—Johnson's quickness in discrimination—A remark of Croker—Johnson's early habits unconquerably vulgar—He might be content with the society fitted to his class—The author an advocate for an ancient aristocracy—Johnson's reverence of rank—Man's importance depends on the power of thought—None comparable to Johnson in conversation—Scott and Byron—The passions at the mercy of the thoughts—Genius independent of opportunity and incident—Society tosses about people at its will—The result of Cowper's seclusion—Dangers of solitude—Some have their wits stirred by society—Necessary to look worldly greatness in the face—At present society turned topsy-turvy—*Parvenu* nobility—Who may be called old peers—A radical party aim to abolish the Upper House—Peerage lowered in the eyes of the people—Mere personal merit incompatible with hereditability—What is impressed in the cradle cannot be washed away.

In July, 1818, died my brother-in-law, Henry Maxwell, Esq. of Ewshot House, in the parish of

Crundal, in Hampshire, about four miles from Farnham, in Surry, in his seventieth year. He was educated at Westminster School, and at Christ Church, Oxford. His father was physician to the forces in Germany in Lord Chatham's war, and his mother was a co-heiress of an elder near branch of the noble house of Lascelles.* In addition to his property in England, he had a good estate in the West Indies, which he finally assigned to Lord Harewood.

In Mr. Maxwell's society I passed many of the happiest days of my life. He had an excellent and highly-cultivated understanding, multifarious reading, and a most extraordinary memory. He had an admirable taste, but a judgment a little inclined to the severe in literature. He was quick and sagacious, subtle, and almost metaphysical. He was shy to strangers, and so silent that few had any idea of his powers, which, as he had great self-possession in his faculties, and great clearness of words, was the more to be regretted. He was mild and benevolent in an eminent degree, and had every moral virtue. His manners were polished, and he lived elegantly and hospitably; but his habits were retired, and he had a strange diffidence, which made him reluctant to go much into mixed society, especially after the death of

* See article "Harewood" in the last edition of "Collins's Peerage," 1812.

Mrs. Maxwell, who lost her life by the deplorable accident of her dress catching fire in Harley Street,* in March, 1789, aged about thirty-four. The same sad fate befell my second daughter, Mrs. Quillinan, in May, 1822, in her twenty-ninth year. Such seem to have been among the destinies of our family.

Mrs. Maxwell was beautiful, admired, beloved, and generally courted. She left an only daughter, an infant then a year old, who survived her but a short time. She made her house delightful to her visiters, and by her liveliness and goodnature won all hearts. In those days the establishments of well-ordered houses of men of fortune and education were kept up with an elegance which is now little regarded.

During the thirty-eight years that I knew Mr. Maxwell never a dispute or an angry word passed between us. He had ill health from a child, which made him sometimes grave, but not peevish. He was adored by all those who depended upon him; and I know not that he ever made an enemy. His charities were extensive and unintermitted. He had a little too much reserve, and was not without a quiet pride. His conversation was to me always delightful and always instructive. His house in London, when I was a young

* See "Gentleman's Magazine," March or April, 1789.

man living in chambers in the Temple, was always open to me, and there I found every kind of luxury and refined cheerfulness. Mrs. Maxwell had an extensive acquaintance, among whom I was of course thrown without the trouble of seeking them. I cannot think of those days without a mixture of delight and melancholy. If any one ever favoured me, and smiled upon me, Mr. Maxwell was the person; and his good opinion was doubly worth having, because he was a critic of refined taste, and a sound judge of mankind.

Mr. Maxwell's seat at Ewshot had once belonged to the ancient and knightly Hampshire family of Gifford, who had already intermarried with the Brydges family in the reign of Henry VIII., and afterwards was sold to a branch of the Bathursts. Mr. Maxwell devised it to my nephew, the eldest son of Mr. Lefroy, who had married Mrs. Maxwell's sister, and who died 1823, aged forty-two.

Thirty years have now elapsed since I visited that once-beloved house. Mr. Maxwell lent me that abode for six months in the winter and spring of 1786; and thence I used sometimes to ride to Moor Park, and meditate in Sir William Temple's gardens there. The nearest neighbour to Ewshot was Sir Henry St. John, of Dogmersfield, who changed his name to Mildmay for his wife's large fortune, and with whom I was familiar rather than friendly, for two or three years at college;—a

capricious, vain, ill-tempered man, with some minor talents and insufferable pretensions. I remember his father Sir Henry—a country squire and a toper, who had, however, represented the county, and was inoffensive and dull, and who latterly seldom stirred from his own table, or his own finely-wooded but rude park,* which had within memory been enclosed from an oak-common. Old Sir Paulet St. John, the grandfather, is said to have been the original of Fielding's Squire Western; but this I believe to have been a false rumour; for there were many traits in Sir Paulet's character totally discordant with those of Western. Sir Paulet loved the amusements of a roaring and sporting country squire; but he was crafty, plotting, ambitious, pushing, and overbearing. Horses, dogs, and the bottle were his delight, and he published a book of farriery. He did not die till about 1778, with a fortune much dilapidated.

Mr. Lefroy, who married my eldest sister, was also brought up at Westminster and Christ Church, and was afterwards Fellow of All Souls' College, as founder's kin. He was a man universally respected for his integrity, his conduct, his polished manners, and his social qualities. He had always lived in high society—perhaps he was

* Dogmersfield once belonged to the Wriothesleys, Earls of Southampton.

a little too ambitious of it, for who has not his little foibles? His house was always full of company, and he delighted to make every one happy. He had four maternal uncles—one was a General in the Austrian service; the youngest, Benjamin Langlois, was a diplomatist, and at one time under-secretary of state—a good and benevolent old man, with much diplomatic experience, but most fatiguingly ceremonious, with abilities not much above the common.

At Mr. Lefroy's house also, as well as at Mr. Maxwell's, I spent unnumbered days of happiness. Mrs. Lefroy was a woman more brilliant, more spiritual, and more beaming with goodness, than I have ever elsewhere seen. The charm of her first address was magical; her eyes were full of lustre; and the copiousness and eloquence of her conversation attracted all ears and won all hearts. She had a warm and rapid poetical genius; she read voraciously; her apprehension was like lightning, and her memory was miraculous. She was spotless; and her heart was the seat of every affectionate and moral virtue. One fatal moment buried all these luminous virtues in the dust. In December, 1804, her horse ran away with her: she lost her courage, fell to the ground, and was dead in a moment, in her fifty-seventh year. Mr. Lefroy followed her to the grave in January, 1806, aged sixty-one.

The nearest neighbours to the Lefroys were the

Austens of Steventon. I remember Jane Austen, the novelist, a little child: she was very intimate with Mrs. Lefroy, and much encouraged by her. Her mother was a Miss Leigh, whose paternal grandmother was a sister of the first Duke of Chandos. Mr. Austen was of a Kentish family, of which several branches have been settled in the Weald, and some are still remaining there. When I knew Jane Austen I never suspected that she was an authoress; but my eyes told me that she was fair and handsome, slight and elegant, but with cheeks a little too full. The last time I think that I saw her was at Ramsgate in 1803: perhaps she was then about twenty-seven years old. Even then I did not know that she was addicted to literary composition.

I have not lived much with authors, though I have seen several, and corresponded with a few. I have seen enough to observe that authors seldom exhibit their minds in conversation, and that the best writers have often been the worst talkers. Perhaps this arises in part from the ambition to excel, and the fear of lowering oneself in the estimation of the listeners. But what Johnson says of Fox is more extraordinary--that he who so abounded in rich and copious oratory did not talk at the Literary Club. Mrs. Montagu, however,—as well as Burke—was eminent for her brilliant conversation.

If authors of genius would be frank, simple, and careless, there can be little doubt that their conversation would be superior to that of others. I cannot account why the genius of Fox did not appear much more in his writings than in his conversation. His oratory was original, deep, subtle, vehement, and expansive; his verses, which have been handed down to us, do not reach beyond an easy prettiness. They have no vigour, high sentiment, nor imagery, nor any force of abstract and recondite thought. Yet that he fondly loved literature is proved by his letters to Gilbert Wakefield. There is no eminent man about whose mind I am more puzzled. Pitt never attempted to compose poetry;—and he was right, for he would certainly have failed. Wise old statesmen have written very fair moral poetry,—such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Henry Wotton; but Burleigh had that sort of intellect which could not have indited a line.

Was ever an abstract truth elicited for the first time in a parliamentary debate?—I recollect no instance, except in the speeches of Burke. The utmost that the best of others arrive at is an ingenious application to the case in question. But this will not do in writing—in authorship we expect something more. Canning was original only in a sort of imaginative and rhetorical humour and wit—there lay his forte; but it had not much

the effect of spontaneous oratory—"it smelt of the lamp!" The reporters have the art sometimes of making decent speeches out of very bad ones.

Thus, from the nature of my undertaking, I wander from one subject to another. It is my purpose to communicate my observations and opinions, and I must follow them as the associations of my ideas bring them to my mind. I do not give a repetition of what is told in books—I speak from myself. But what if these opinions are blind and wilful, rather than the results of consideration and reflection? I adventure this chance at my own peril: they must submit to the test of wise men's judgment.

There may be many who spend their lives in a dull state of vacuity, and who see and hear all which passes around them without comment or mental apprehension. But as others are impatient to know, and restless till they can judge, they feel interested in the aid of those who have given their days and nights to intellectual labour. No one can be sure that he comes to right conclusions;—his best chance will be to compare them with those of other minds.

The charm of Boswell's "Johnson" is the register of the great moralist's opinions, though much caution must be used in distinguishing what he merely throws out in the heat of argument. Johnson's quickness in making distinctions and happiness of conversational illustration

were his greatest talent. It sometimes led him on to be sophistical for the sake of victory. In this collision he was more happy than in lonely contemplation. It provoked his energies, and forced off that morbid languor and diseased melancholy which were in his body and his mind.

Croker remarks that though Johnson lived latterly at the table of wealth and luxury, he never mingled in the society of high life. The truth is, that his early habits were offensively vulgar, and every rank of life had then its own habits and ceremonials, which perhaps were carried too far; though great evils have arisen from throwing down, as at present, all barriers. No one ever yet entirely put off, when closely viewed, the familiar usages of his childhood. It would not therefore have been desirable for Johnson in those days to have much mixed with classes so much above him in mere station. And what would he have gained? Each class is well in its own way, but not to go out of it. Johnson, while he kept in his own order, was a thousand times greater than the highest of them. There was nothing which he could learn from them, except the smoothness of the surface. The loss was to them, not to him. I am for an ancient, inherited, and inheritable aristocracy, because I firmly believe it to be for the good of the whole;—but I am no servile worshipper of it; I would not for a moment submit to its insolence, nor pay any other

respect to it than the former ceremonials which attach to its precedence. And as to a *parvenu* aristocracy, I think it one of the greatest abuses of social institutions. If men think talents or wealth just grounds of distinction — as they are—let them rely on that on which they build their distinction. Though Johnson associated little with the great, he had the weakness to feel an adulatory reverence of them at the first address. He was in this respect the reverse of Swift, whose contrary extreme was, however, still more offensive and absurd.

It is by thought that man becomes important to the public: individual actions are limited in extent, and in their effects for the most part temporary. But he to whom Nature has not given the nice perception and fine feeling of high talents, must rest content with acquired and artificial knowledge. He gains by toil, and repeats by memory. His heart and his conviction are seldom in what he says. He is the mere conduit-pipe of intelligence, and not its fountain. Such an one's opinions require no register, because they are already to be found in books.

In my time I have not found men who conversed at all like Johnson—though several who excelled in humour and the relation of stories and *bon-mots*. Johnson had seen a diversity of literary characters, and been admitted into all the *penetralia* of authorship: and with a deep natural

sagacity he saw into these men's minds, and all their workings. The result was too much abatement of the respect which the world had paid them.

I knew Scott, who threw into his conversation the character of his writings; but I never saw Byron. I suspect that he did not converse very well, except by some momentary fit: he was too morbid, too jealous, and too irritable. His knowledge was irregular, and his whole mind a chaos of light and darkness. Bloomfield was dull in conversation; but humble, simple, mild, and unpretending. Some cultivate a technical art of conversation, which, if inoffensive, is apt to be quaint and insipid. It appears to me that the immediate results of conversation are seldom as instructive as the hints they elicit for future consideration.

The passions are in some degree at the mercy of the thoughts, as are the thoughts of the passions. It is a moral duty therefore to endeavour to think rightly. By dispelling false attractions we get rid of the danger of their delusions. But in the last age the greater part of those who shone most in thought and intellect—if literature is to be the proof of these—had no great opportunity of conversational light. Take Burns, Beattie, Cowper, Gray, Mason, Tom Warton, Joseph Warton, Darwin—they all lived in comparative seclusion. Not one of them much frequented the capital,

where alone a concentration of conversational powers is to be found.

If genius is independent of opportunity and accident, yet we may have a just curiosity to know the opportunities and accidents in the lives of those who possess it.

They who live in society are tossed about by the whirl of the external elements on which they are thrown. They do not move by their own force and at their own volition:—they are like some powerless animal borne along upon an irresistible torrent. Their strength is not from themselves, but from the stream by which they are hurried forward. Thus we see men make some figure in office, who when out of office show no talent at all. It is because the machinery of office bears them up. He who is lord of himself, and exists upon his own resources, is a noble but a rare being.

Cowper lived in utter seclusion, but speculated eloquently upon the moral world. He was not at the mercy of the opinions of the day; but looked upon things with his own uninfluenced mind. He saw the vanities of all the bubble passions and ambitions of bustling mankind. The simplicity and frankness with which he poured out his impressions have made him a favourite even with that multitude whose ways he despised. The worldling himself is frequently sick of the stir and dust in which he lives, and enjoys solitude—at least in

imagination. But these outbreathings are still more forceful in Cowley than in Cowper, because Cowley had been long involved in the toil and fever of public business. Charles Cotton and Sir Henry Wotton also are delightful praisers of solitude. Charles Fox, when he retired to St. Anne's Hill, felt intensely the quiet joy of solitude. Johnson alone, of speculative minds, had a horror of solitude.

There are, no doubt, some dangers in solitude. If the mind is subject to morbid illusions it will nurse them. To those disposed to indolence it will be an encouragement of that evil. It may foster humoursome selfishness, and spleen, and misanthropy. The bad passions are sometimes dispersed in the winnowing conflicts, as storms dissipate the vapours of bad air.

Some men think with most effect in society; it puts their faculties in motion—they want outward impulses. But these are almost always men without imagination. Now the imagination is the great endowment of the mind—without it no one can be truly spiritual. What comes within the experience of the senses is very limited. But what are called realities always fetter the mind, and disenchant it.

If they who would keep their heads and hearts in a state of loftiness cannot look worldly greatness in the face, it is their duty to seek retirement. The great ones of the world are always insolent,

and require to be firmly fronted. By such greatness I mean those who rest their consequence on adventitious circumstances—on their wealth, their titles, their offices, their establishments, and the rank of the circles in which they move. These people always feel an insulting confidence of their own arrogant superiority, till checked and abased. But, being intrinsically mean, they are as humble and obsequious to an enlightened courage, as they are disgustingly haughty to those whom they dazzle.

In these days, when all society has been turned topsy-turvy, such men are more numerous, and are doubly offensive. If they who wanted birth have extraordinary personal merit, their advancement may be excused; but this has not often been the case: they have got forward by intrigue, corruption, servility, and dishonesty. Look at the greater part of the men who have been advanced from nothing in the last fifty years—they are a miserable set—they have neither had virtues, nor talents, nor knowledge, nor even manners. The nobility who take a leading part in society and public business are almost all new nobility. Some of the richest nobles are new peers, or at least not old ones. I cannot call any one an old peer whose creation was subsequent to the death of Charles II.—in truth I think we ought not to include any in this class subsequent to the first ten years of James I. Queen Anne, soon after

her accession, created three or four, who have since been powerful—such as Gower, Conway, Hervey. As to what a peerage ought to be; politicians and theorists will always differ: there are too many selfish passions concerned in the consideration. There is a party now who are driving all their might to have no peers at all. Of course they will not succeed in this, unless there is to be a radical revolution.

The peerage has undoubtedly fallen very low in the estimation of the people in the last forty years. Many co-operating causes have produced this result; and it has been a very unlucky one for the peace and subordination of society. The Upper House is not only a most useful but a necessary branch of the constitution; but I will repeat—however distasteful the position may be—that it ought not to be filled with *parvenus*. If personal merit be set up as the plea, then the quality of hereditability must be abandoned; for why is not the son of an old peer as likely to have personal merit as the son of a *parvenu!* Is the attainment of high office the ground for this reward?—Surely the office itself is reward enough. It is true that there ought to be two or three lawyers in the Upper House, but not twenty or thirty. And is every courtier and placeman to have his lucky promotions crowned by a peerage?

We see of what stuff these new men are made: the smell of the old cask never leaves them. What

is impressed in the cradle is never washed away; it is like the stain of blood on Lady Macbeth's arm. There is an equivocal class in the peerage, neither old nor new:—these are always playing between the two parties. When they think themselves safe, they attack the *parvenus;* but they become liberals against the old feudal peerage.

CHAPTER IV.

Is it practicable to turn one's mind from painful thoughts?—Author reproached either way—A poetical temperament not fitted for the world—Virtue sometimes overleaps its bounds into vice—Villany of lawyers and agents—Thellusson case—They who have led a safe life have no mercy for a perilous one—Friendship empty—The worldling is always a boaster—Desire of a good name exposes us to incessant mortification—Defiance of the world—Coarseness and ferocity—Insults must be repelled—The author grave, but not gloomy—He is emancipated from all forms—Various expositions of what should constitute true poetry—Trickery and corruptness in poetry—Nature must not be overcoloured—Nature is always the same: it is the essence of fashion to change—Pictures of temporary manners an inferior order of poetry—Gray's "Elegy"—Pleasures of Imagination, Memory, and Hope—Mediocre poetry—The great poets never tire the reader—Every great poet is simple—Flowery diction admired by fools—Ornament only fit for what is pretty—Quality of invention to be regarded—Taste of matter-of-fact minds—In what words there is a charm—Poetry must be congenial to truth—Images coloured by passion—All of true taste love poetry—Not inconsistent with sound philosophy.

THERE may be a doubt whether to turn away one's mind from vexatious and agonizing thoughts is practicable; and if practicable, whether wise and right. If practicable, some contend that it encourages recklessness, and deludes us to throw off what ought to engage our deep consideration. In short, whatever we do, we shall find cavillers

and censurers. I sometimes resort to my imagination to escape from my unutterable woes: at other times my fears, my presages, my indignations, and my regrets, hang like barbed arrows upon my brain. In each case I am always blamed. When I escape, I am told it is a reckless flight; when I dwell upon my sorrows, I am told it is an unmanly indulgence. When we experience neither candour nor justice in mankind, it almost drives us in despair to suppress every generous emotion, and to exist as long as we can in a state of carelessness, hardness, forgetfulness, and self-indulgence.

As to myself, all opposite capacities and duties have been always required of me. It has been demanded that sensitiveness and unruffled patience should each stop at the point where it answered the purpose of others,—and that I should change in a moment to opposite temperaments when it pleased these exacting beings to give the word. We cannot at once have hardness and tenderness, heat and cold, vivacity and dulness. We ought not to be too anxious about the good opinion of others: in proportion to our anxiety it will, out of mere perverseness, be denied to us.

A poetical temperament is of all others the least fitted to the world. Its inequalities, its transparencies, its frankness, its indignations, its ebbs and flows,—are all the reverse of craft: and

what but craft will the world be ruled by? "Well, then, if this be so," cry the censors, "let us have no more poetical temperaments." But the censor ought to recollect that he cannot make the world as he would have it. Providence has chosen to give poetical temperaments; and this grand reformer has no power to turn gold into lead, nor the sun's beams into ice. It is in the choice of him whom Nature has endowed with the poetical temperament to forbear from writing; but not in his choice to forbear from feeling as a poet.

We must forgive imperfections in human beings, and not wonder if, now and then, virtue overleaps its boundary into fault; but does vice ever overleap its boundary into virtue? They who neither have virtue, nor pretend to it, have this advantage—that they are great exacters and extortioners, but no payers. But it is better for those who have no virtue not to pretend to it: hypocrisy only aggravates the size of vice by the addition of another most flagitious crime.

I have known neither mercy, nor candour, nor just judges, in life: all has been stern call for ceaseless labours, to be neither recompensed nor cheered. The appetite of the extortioner increases by feeding;—

> And where the fell attorney prowls for prey,

if you do not resist the first false charge of a few

pounds, he will go on till he gets £99. 19*s*. 6*d*. per cent of all your property. Let the Thellusson case be a crying instance. But he is not content with taking all; it is one of his tricks to bring you in debt into the bargain, that he may hold a rod over you to keep you mute.

They who have had the good luck to choose a safe path,—from whatever cause, but which has more often than not arisen from stupidity,—always affect to be optimists, and will neither admit nor believe the dangers, and difficulties, and sufferings attendant upon life. The love to mortify and degrade is a leading passion of mankind, and it is most so with those who assume the character of candour, equanimity, and propriety. I hate the cold-hearted: I would prefer a man full of vices, if he mingles generous virtues with them.

And what is friendship but a name?—

says Goldsmith in his "Hermit." These people will affect to condole with you; but they will always condole so as to throw the blame upon you. The world is a masquerade, in which the devil appears in various disguises, but always mischievous;—never so mischievous, however, as when he plays the religious hypocrite, or the fraudulent agent of the law.

The cunning worldling never speaks of the insults he receives; he boasts, on the contrary,

how kind every one is to him. How many of these wretches I have seen, smooth in their words, but with gall and bitter poison in their hearts! I would cut off my tongue or my hand, before I would say or write what I did not feel. But nothing is more vexatious than to desire to be well spoken of: it puts us at the mercy of the malignant and the false. Let one do right as far as one can, and put all comments at defiance. This will not secure good words; but if we have them as little as in the other case, we shall have saved the price for them. What is the world's flattery worth?—Not the cost of a moment's painful step. We cannot secure esteem by deserving it. People will be thus encouraged to take advantage of the desire, for the purpose of pressing unreasonably upon us. Mankind,

> Like women, born to be controll'd,
> Stoop to the forward and the bold.

What harm can a bad man's foul breath do if one keeps aloof from it?

If respect and esteem were dependent on unassuming good sense, talent, and virtue, we ought to be careful to be humble, and anxious at every symptom of disapprobation. But one may with at least an equal chance of consideration go one's own way, and be bound by nothing where conscience does not interfere. An affected obsequiousness and base bending to the humours of

others will produce no selfish benefit. It may be said that this doctrine goes to make a bear-garden of the world, with every one following his own will: but it is better than disguise, hypocrisy, and mean cunning. We then have to encounter an open enemy, and know how to be guarded against him.

It may be that he who puts the world at defiance will be defied by the world: but what avails that? Their spite is defeated by the very act of defiance. Nothing damps genius like servility and a false humbleness. Attempt to conciliate, and you will only show your own weakness. Calumny and misrepresentation will follow every one, do what he will. The food of half mankind is malice and detraction. He who scorns the little tricks of the world, will get the ascendant over them.

As to coarseness and ferocity, they are contrary to my nature; but there are occasions on which one may be pardoned for being irritated into them. There is so much provocation, so much wrong, and so much insidiousness and treachery in life, that he who can be always calm under them must be of a nature unsusceptible of any noble emotion.

It is a duty to repel insult and expose injustice it is a dastard heart which is patient under them Every sort of arrogance ought to be punished and

crushed. With me, indignation is a ready and ruling passion: some call it morbidness, some fire, and some pride;—at any rate, they give it the name which they think most odious. Not to have been provoked by the opposition and plots which have pursued me through life, could only have taken place from a deadness of blood. But my blood has always been of a warm and flaming nature, rising into a blaze at a touch or a look: yet the superficial see nothing in my appearance but a deep and immoveable gloom.

I am grave at times, and cloudy in my countenance, but not gloomy. I am changeable in my humours, and in a moment pass from melancholy to joy, and from joy to melancholy. I have lived so long in storms and dangers, that where I was once fearful I am become bold. I repulse by my frowning visage, and discourage by my seeming insensibility.

But the manner in which I have been treated emancipates me from all forms, and I am not bound to keep terms with the world. Solitude is no terror to me; and so far, therefore, I am independent of the world's injuries. I keep my own hours; the little sleep I take is by day, and I toil through the long night at the lamp. Thus I work without interruption, in the repose of profound silence. Imagination supplies the want of those material objects which are veiled in the

mantle of darkness. It is the imagination which keeps the heart in a perpetual flow of energetic emotions.

The favourite effort of technical critics and dull moralists is to mislead the public as to the purposes and duties of imagination. This high faculty is the balm and light of life: without it there can be no noble thoughts or grand feelings. It supplies the materials of reason, and a far wider and deeper field of observation than experience. This is the power which enables us to enter into men's hearts and know the human character: what is called experience seldom shows us any thing more than the surface. From good poetry, properly written, the best moral lessons are to be drawn.

But a large portion of what is called poetry is, it must be confessed, useless and childish. It essentially defective, because it is not an embo ment and exemplification of truth. I do mean a particular truth which has actually occurred, but abstract truth. To this great design a poet should give his days and nights: there are inexhaustible subjects for such grave and instructive inventions.

A minor poet, however, deals in trifles which bring the art into disrepute. He has no invention, but merely attempts to supply the ornaments of a glittering dress. But the multitude are too apt to love these gewgaws and sweetmeats rather

than solid matter and substantial food, and the trickery of false poetry rather than the eloquence of true. If it is not buckramed, and gemmed, and harmonized into an insipid polish, it does not strike them.

Grand emotions arising from the grand images which imagination voluntarily presents, are the only genuine poetry. It is only from imaginative subjects blazing before the mind that sublime or pathetic poetry can be written. While objects are present,—not in idea, but in their material forms,—who can write? Memory will not effect this purpose, because it does not give the images, but only the types of them.

He who is truly possessed by the Muse always appears whimsical to vulgar and dull minds, because there are present to him shapes and voices which they cannot see or hear. His impulses seem to them without cause, and his hopes and fears but empty shadows: but he is almost always under the dominion of spirits.

There are few things of my life which I regret more than having suffered myself, by the ascendancy of bad criticism, to be restrained from entering at full liberty into the genuine paths of the Muse. Imagination should have been given her ample and unchecked range. In all her opening vistas, and glens, and solitudes, she should have "given to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." She should have presented

the infinite varieties of the grandeur and beauty of creation, animate and inanimate, as in a mirror: not indeed as they appear to the outward senses, but to the mind's eye; and to the mind's eye in a grave humour,—not in a state of fantastic wantonness. Such poetry never tires or satiates: it carries on the soul in a stream of delight, as the incense of the morning air breathes rapture on the senses.

The strain which does not hurry us forward by awakening instantaneous sympathy, is not the voice of the Muse: it is a false oracle, which speaks obscurities for want of inspiration. I persevere in the opinion that studied poetry is good for nothing.

When once that which constitutes the real charm of poetry is misunderstood, authors are driven to tricks to excite attention, which lead to all sorts of corruptness. It is of the essence of this art, or rather gift, to represent what is imagined, and not what is copied from particular instances in actual existence. To render the picture of reality more grand or beautiful, authors resort to false colours,—to exaggeration and glitter. This is the vice of modern poetry. Probability and chasteness are thus put at defiance; and no reader of taste can long persevere to peruse those compositions without being wearied and palled.

There should be no attempt to overcolour na-

ture. Every thing should be drawn with a sacred regard to truth; and nothing should be admitted which cannot carry with it our belief. Writers of very little genius can put together incongruous things, and thus excite notice by surprise. *Incredulus odi.* I abhor the cold efforts of mechanical art. Nothing which is not simple and touching, and does not awaken the unforced sympathies of the bosom, is good, valuable, and genuine. The simplest and easiest path is, in fact, the best; but secondary authors cannot be brought to believe so.

Nature is always the same: fashion is always changing; it is its essence to change. Therefore he who seeks to gratify the fashion must produce something different from nature. He is driven to affectations, overwrought tints, impossible or improbable combinations, and the exhibition of magnified objects. Shakspeare in his wildest imaginations never does this; he never outsteps nature. To outstep nature shows an author's weakness and want of poetical power: it is like the little man who struts and stalks to make himself appear taller than he is.

But the false and dull critic, who loves forced stimulants, cries, "We have nature before our eyes;—we want something more striking." We have nature before us, but not nature associated and embodied with intellectual and moral impressions and feelings. We require the aid of the

great poet to do this for us: and he must do this by the power of his invention,—by imagining events, characters, and scenery; but he must imagine them, in every particular, after the course and manner of nature.

For these reasons my own taste never leads me to enjoy or approve those poems which represent temporary manners. But here a difficulty arises: it may be argued that my doctrine would exclude all poetry which is copied from observation. The materials may be drawn from observation, and used inventively,—not confined to the portraits of individuals. We come then to the pictures which one gives of himself, and of his own internal movements. How can these be poetical? They are only so when those internal movements so described are full of imagination; and then they have a verity which has some advantages over what is painted to exist in imaginary persons; but altogether the chances are that the representation of the imaginary person will be more poetical. Gray, in his "Elegy," writes in the character of an imaginary person. This gives the quality of invention to his poem; for invention is not confined, as some suppose, to story, but equally embraces spiritual existence.

The Pleasures of Imagination, the Pleasures of Memory, and the Pleasures of Hope, cannot be accurately separated from each other: the last is a part of the first, and the second is closely inter-

mingled with it. They can only give novelty by varying their illustrations, and giving them in a different style and form of verse. I do not think that didactic poetry is the best suited to its powers; but it is the ore, not its form, which gives the charm. Truth, eternal and grand truth, is the object, in whatever form it be conveyed; but it must be truth exhibited, not by reasoning, but by the lamp of imagination.

It is universally admitted that there are no other compositions so wearisome, or so disgusting, as mediocre poetry; wearisome when it is weak and insipid,—disgusting when it is factitious and unnatural. Perhaps the latter should be excluded even from the mediocre, because it is no poetry at all. It is true that verses will sometimes excite for a time the attention of the vulgar, in proportion as they are bad, because the mob have always a gaping curiosity for wonders; but wonders, when they have been some time gazed at, cease to be wonders, and then the spell is vanished.

But did any one ever tire in reading the great poets? All our feelings and buried ideas instantly respond to them, like the strings of the Æolian harp to the breeze. They have a transparency and native fire which lights up all the slumbering and cloudy figures of our brains, and gives an instant glow to the currents which circle round the heart. But what is obscure and far-fetched,

as well as what is extravagant, will never operate in this way. It is a primary requisite to be lucid; it is another, in my apprehension, to be flowing and unstudied.

These discussions cannot be useless: wrong canons of criticism lead to the depression of genius and the exaltation of charlatanism. False composition is at once mischievous, and more difficult to execute than that which is true; more difficult to those who have the genius to execute the true,—and they who have not the genius ought not to write. It is of no use to put tawdry words together, and create monsters by extravagant combinations; nor is affected dreaminess and mysterious unintelligibility the strain of the real Muse. Inspiration speaks clearly, and is the oracle of truth. One forced note, one tint wrought beyond nature, destroys the spell of poetry.

Simplicity—and this is not inconsistent with richness and grandeur—is the characteristic of every great poet. If there be inspiration, and that inspiration be indulged, how can there be labour and studied language? A great thought will bear up any language: what is great in itself does not require to be adorned. I believe that a poem of great thoughts, written without a single ornament, might be found deeply interesting, and even excellent. It is a slavish adoration of models which suppresses in the bud so many grand possibilities of genius. I would tear away the

veil from Nature, and show her in all the grandeur of her naked beauty.

Fools think that poetry consists in a flowery diction,—that it ought to be a garden of bright words, and similes, and metaphors. It is the reverse: it must have high thoughts and stern plain language. But it must not be historical; history and poetry are opposites. It must not relate facts, but imaginations.

Grandeur is, of course, the first essence of poetry; but there may be poetry which is only gentle and pretty, and this latter will endure ornament if it be not too gaudy and studied. These gentle strains, however, are rather sickly, except to the feeble-minded; as we may instance in the already forgotten poems of Jerningham, and in too large a portion of Shenstone's "Elegies;" and, according to my taste, in many parts of the favourite Goldsmith. Even Mason is not free from them, nor Beattie in his minor poems.

As not only invention, but the quality of what is invented, must be regarded, it is not wonderful that so few writers of poetry reach the standard. At least four-fifths of the great body of English poetry might be committed to the flames without much loss. I cannot help supposing that many of the authors I would so condemn, might have written better if they had not taken false models. Few are above the influence of fashion, and they yield to the momentary appetite of the multitude,

who commonly delight in false stimulants. It is, moreover, easier for secondary talents to work by artifice than by inspiration.

Matter-of-fact minds necessarily love best that which has least imagination and most of observance; but they who are much occupied in watching the frivolous varieties of the actual surface of life, have little genius. The imaginations of life are its only grand attractions; reality is always coarse and disappointing. For this reason, whatever is a copy of individual cases exactly as they are, is repulsive. A strict attention to the principles and probabilities of human nature is not the less indispensable.

There is sometimes a charm in words; but they are unstudied breathings from the fire of the imaginative power. They come of themselves, and cannot be combined by art or toil. Shakspeare has more of this charm than any other poet, as indeed he has more of every quality of the essences of poetry; but this he would not have had, with all his genius, if he had not followed his ideas as they rose.

Where poetry is not congenial to the sober hues of truth—where it is not deeply imbued with a plaintive morality, it cannot belong to the first order. It ought to be fitted to the gravest tones of the heart, in its most solemn and most meditative moments, when sorrow and experience have made us melancholy and wise.

We see things in imagination coloured according to the passions which circumstances have provoked; and these, when properly selected, are the elements of poetry. Without poetry, the highest movements of the mind would never have been described. No one therefore who does not love poetry can have an intellect of a high taste. They who call themselves philosophers may think otherwise, but in that case they will not be philosophers of the mind. We must look to poetry to furnish us with some of the most precious *data* for this philosophy.

CHAPTER V.

Mankind set up models best suited to the taste of each—Anecdotes not always instructive—Self-importance—Every thing may be objected to—What do we require to know of others?—Use of private history—Autobiography—Friends may neglect to preserve memorials of one—No one can see into the secrets of another's heart and head—The value in part depends on the importance of the person recorded—Authors may judge of their own compositions after an interval—Effects of vanity—Many know their own weakness—Popular authors insist on popularity as the test of merit—Literary merit may be precisely determined—Yet there are false judges—Many late publications of lives of authors—Their merits and defects—Burke, Burns, Byron—Others how far deficient—The visionary faculty—Lives of authors seldom full of action—Rousseau—Author does not endeavour to find apologies for autobiography—Monstrous invention a proof of want of genius—Johnson's test of excellence—Purposes answered by genius—Mortification of being a cipher—No lot contented—Qualities lamented as defects sometimes prove otherwise—Susceptibility of external senses not always accompanied by internal movements—Possession of high endowments not to be desired because unhappy—Genius entitled to mercy and candour as well as others—Talent not for self alone—False pretensions to genius common—Labour cannot supply want of genius—Disrelish of forced productions—Obscurity of far-fetched thoughts, and blaze of genius—Rarity of genius not to be accounted for—Mechanism will lead astray from true poetry—Wearisomeness of secondary poets—Only one good poet in "Mirror for Magistrates"—Lord Buckhurst—This a practical proof of the rarity of poetical genius.

It is a common failing of human nature to judge of others by a model and standard best suited

to ourselves. Yet a variety of models and standards is necessary for the affairs of the world. The more I think on autobiography, the more perilous I find it to define its limits, and keep within them: and the attempt to satisfy others is still more perilous. There is a demand for anecdote which few can supply;—while, however amusing, anecdotes too much multiplied are apt to be much more delusive than instructive. The memorialist is too apt to overvalue his own importance; and even where he does not his own just importance,—at least the importance which envy, jealousy, and rivalry, are willing to concede to him—ingenuity may find some objection to the matter of which he makes use whatever his choice may be. It may be called either too general, or too minute; too far-fetched, or too trite; too obscure, or too familiar; too ostentatious, or too mean; and, in short, the very opposite of all that is written may be perversely demanded.

The only safe guide by which such an author can direct his course, is to ask himself what information he would wish in the life of another who has bent his ambition and labours to the same pursuits. We have many celebrated poets who have left no memorials of themselves, and of whose personal history little is otherwise known: we have no difficulty in fixing on many points regarding them, on which we wish to have

our curiosity gratified: we are entitled therefore to illustrate similar points regarding ourselves, and not think them impertinent or irrelevant.

Private history enables us to ascertain an author's sincerity; and that is essential to the authority of his opinions. If one who writes sentimentally and gravely should turn out a man of mockery, who turns the world and its groups and scenes into a jest,—the charm of his serious compositions from that moment is gone. But can we trust one in the features and colours he gives to his own portrait? Would a hunchback paint his own deformity?

In spite of these difficulties, the best materials of biography are derived from self-written memoirs: for these always bear with them internal evidence of authenticity, or vain disguise, which cannot be mistaken. He who over-estimates himself, will in such memoirs continually betray his error; and few readers will be so wanting in sagacity as not to detect him. Malevolent detraction may also try to misrepresent him, and it may succeed for a time, but truth will triumph at last.

Who can wisely trust to friendship to preserve the remembrance of him, when he is gone? What a friend knows himself, he is apt to assume that every one knows; and thus leaves the record unwritten, till all is faded from the memory. But if he were inclined to write, is he always a ju-

dicious friend, capable of performing his task well? Friends may see too near,—as others may see too distantly. And who by mere external observance can guess what is passing in another's bosom or brain? One passes comparatively but few of the hours of one's life in the sight of any friend. And do not even those most attached to us frequently mistake our motives, views, opinions, and feelings? Sarcasm will answer to this, "And if they do mistake, what does it signify?"

But if a memorial be justifiable, it ought to be a true memorial. Its value to the public, when true, must depend on the worth and talent of the person memorialized. To have been the author of a book is not a sufficient pretension without reference to the quality of the book. It is said that no one can be a proper judge of his own writings. I do not accede to this opinion. I think that many authors are quite as accurate judges in this respect as other critics. If they are sometimes partial, they are free from the contrary passion,—they desire to find fault, which is not less misleading.

Perhaps no one is a fair judge of his own composition immediately after he has finished it, and before the heat in which it was written has subsided: but after an interval, when he has been conversant with other subjects and the works of others, he can pronounce with as fair a probability of accuracy, as on the productions of other

writers who have similar tastes and indulge similar associations.

He who knows his own weakness, is inexcusable if any vanity induces him to put himself forward as strong; and many do know it, though others may delude themselves. But he who suffers himself to be cast down by false criticism and malignant cavil deserves the fate to which he is subjected. An unmerited fame is allowed to some; an unmerited depreciation falls on others: but whatever be the fame, intrinsic worth is capable of supporting itself, if it has fortitude. And if there be intrinsic worth, the register of its opinions, and the events of its life, must be instructive.

There may be the desire of fame without the qualities to acquire it; and this passion may begin early and continue late; but it does not do so. Where it is a deceitful inebriation, it generally evaporates after some experience. Very few will struggle on after repeated failures: failure and non-acquirement of fame are not the same thing. The enemy in the one case is active—in the other, passive: where he does not dare attack, he attempts to smother by slight. But in almost all genius there is a fire, which, though it sleeps sometimes, never dies.

Authors who have been popular hold out that popularity is the sole test of merit: they there-

fore deny that Milton was neglected in his life-time. But what fact is more clear? Fame commences by accident or management: it will not endure but through positive desert. If fame is not the certain proof of merit, censure and abuse are as little the certain proofs of demerit: we must determine by admitted principles the intrinsic qualities of the aspirant. Whether one is a poet of true genius, can be decided beyond rational controversy.

Notwithstanding this, however, they who take upon themselves to adjudge often do dispute, and deny in despite of all proof: but these judgments are only in force for a little while. There are men who live by corrupt judgments, and are paid for them. It would be miserable if there were no fame but such as was the result of caprice or evil motives.

During the last thirty or forty years a great many single lives have been published of English authors, such as Cowper, Beattie, Burns, Sir William Jones, Lord Kames, Gibbon, Cumberland, the Wartons, Hayley, Sheridan, Burke, Byron, Robertson, John Home, Chatterton, Kirke White, Dr. Parr, Goldsmith, Smollett, Leyden, &c. These furnish a vast fund of intellectual and moral information. But many of them want profundity of disquisition, and the disclosure of those secrets of the mind and heart which we most wish

to know. Letters are useful, but a narrative made up of a string of letters is but a bungling sort of biography.

The greatest names in this list are Burke, Burns, and Byron; an opinion which will scarcely be controverted. Of some of the others the very eminent pretensions may be called into doubt. In the greater part of them a rich and bold invention is not displayed,—at least in a high degree. Was it that they had it not, or that they were restrained by cold models from putting it forth? I doubt if they had it in the full extent requisite. It seems to me that where it exists, it will find its way out. But if it did not exist in those, in whom did it exist? Did it exist in those who never came forward at all? In whom it was as the gems buried "in the deep unfathomed ocean?" Or is it a power bestowed only with such excessive rarity?

I suspect that the visionary faculty is very common; but that the rarity lies in the power of embodying in language what it presents. Rare as it is, does it always secure applause when it appears? Perhaps not. The multitude applaud only that to which they are accustomed, and which they are taught to admire: they often like what they do not praise, and praise what they do not like. Still the principles of poetical invention are definite, and the execution can be mea-

sured with much precision. It cannot fail to be distinguished what part of a composition is invention, nor whether it be probable, and grand, or pathetic, or beautiful, or comic. If it combine probability with one of these qualities, it must have merit, and deserve the name of genius.

But it will be said that the life of an eminent author may afford few materials for biography. Certainly not, if it be confined to facts: for a meditative person often passes his existence without any bodily adventure or activity; but his mind is never idle or unexploring. And here comes the advantage of autobiography; for who can tell perfectly another's secret thoughts and feelings? To a common eye, and in outward appearance, a rich genius does not differ from a dull, uninformed creature. It is of little interest to be told those vulgar events, which may equally befall the gifted and the ungifted.

Could any one have had a full idea of Rousseau's character from what might have been related by any other biographer than himself? An impartial stranger may tell some things which an author cannot, or will not tell of himself. Gray could have told us many things of himself, which the most intimate friend could not tell: but he was too fastidious and morbid to be frank. How much one would have wished an autobiography

from the two Wartons, who knew so much of the literary history of their own, as well as of former times!

It will seem by these observations as if I was endeavouring to find an apology for these memorials: and some will cry out, that in doing so I have the presumption to put myself in association with great names; and that if even this could be forgiven, I have brought forward none of the curious confessions on which I have founded the defence of autobiography. I cannot be sure of the value of the matter I have produced. I have endeavoured to lay open my mind with frankness, as well as with deep self-examination: if I have failed, I must endure the consequence; but I shall not repent of the trial. I shall have said enough to afford ample materials for a just judgment of me. If I am weak, I cannot fail to have betrayed my weakness in such an extent of pages of original matter, and in the delivery of such a multitude of opinions and sentiments.

To those who deem monstrous inventions, and wild and improbable extravagances, the proofs of poetical genius, I have nothing to say. I consider them to be evidences of the direct reverse; and that they who think so can have neither talent, taste, feeling, nor judgment. If they mistake, — as they constantly do, — what is the nature of imagination, it is vain to argue with them.

I am not ignorant how they are led into these errors. It is easier for these inapprehensive intellects to estimate what is mechanical and measured by artificial rules, than what is natural and produced by the inspiration of inborn genius. Joinery, and especially joinery of violent contrasts, is striking even to the dim and purblind eye.

Nature, force, and novelty, are the three qualities which Johnson justly puts forth as tests of excellence; but to make poetry, these must be presented through the vehicle of imagination: the most difficult of all, perhaps, is novelty. There may be originality without novelty; because that is original, which is drawn from the sources of an author's own mind,—even though the same thing has been said before. It is very rare that what is true has not been anticipated by some other mind. But though it may not be new, it must not be trite,—nor must the subject be unimportant.

A gifted spirit goes forth into the world, not merely to hold a mirror to it, but to throw a light upon it. Every one is not formed to read the inscriptions which are written, however clearly, on all the objects of creation. It requires some ardour of unearthly ambition to hope to do so, and to aspire to the energy of the high task:—the occasions are various on which these elucidations may be brought forward; and, among the rest, auto-

biography gives some opportunities of a peculiar kind.

To consider oneself born into the world as one of tens of millions of undistinguished beings, causes a rather depressive feeling. But the glory of obtaining notice is in proportion to the number of contenders. Were one to calculate nicely at the commencement, few minds would be bold enough to enter the lists. But it is very doubtful whether distinction, when attained, gives the enjoyment we anticipate, or any portion of it. They who, with a calm self-complacence,

> Pursue the noiseless tenor of their way,

are more likely to be happy. But, alas! there is no content in any lot or condition of human life. And who does not look back with regret to much of the course he has trod? I mourn with deep melancholy for the years I have lost in idleness,—seeing what might have been done by daily and unbroken industry. Yet, compared with many, I have not been idle. Perhaps, however, the mind requires some recreation, and uninterrupted labour may deaden it.

I have found that many of the qualities in my nature, or circumstances in my fate,—which, as a boy and long afterwards, I lamented as defects or obstructions,—have been the means by which I have been carried on through this troublesome

warfare of life: that when I was morbid, and shy, and agitated, where others were calm, I was nursing energies which have supported me in misfortune, and strengthened me for toil. Had I had the self-possession of my companions, I should have been unimpressible by those high susceptibilities which have been the charm of my existence. When the force with which objects pressed upon my outward senses, and the keenness of the internal perception which followed them, kept me in a state of painful perturbation, I thought it was an imperfect organization which made me look upon others, with whom I compared myself as my superiors. Yet to this very organization do I owe whatever notice, or whatever pleasure, I have experienced in life.

Whether the external senses may be sometimes highly susceptible without a proportionate internal or intellectual movement or capacity, I cannot venture to pronounce; but it seems to me that they may: yet, without the combination, they will produce a mere material and individual effect. The senses may be exquisitely fine, yet the understanding may be weak, or at any rate not proportionally sensitive; or the heart may be less capable of congenial emotions;—all must concur to make eminent poetical genius. The failure of the last is not infrequent where the others co-operate perfectly. The result is, then, a false

pathos, where glitter is substituted for passion. Art and talent can never produce any substitute for the sensibility of the affections.

But this sort of conjunction of outward and inward impressibility is often capricious; and it is this which gives a moodiness and uncertainty to genius, that makes superficial observers call its sincerity in question. It is often overcome where others do not see the cause; and sometimes stands unmoved, where others observe subjects for strong feeling. In these cases there are powerful counteracting movements within, not perceptible by others. Genius must feel at its own time and place, and when all its various faculties coalesce.

These gifts may not make the possessor happy; but that is no reason for a denial of their existence. Providence knows its own purposes, and gives them at its own will. But no doubt it allows to the gifted the option how to use the dispensation. If they abuse it, they must abide the consequences: the gift may not be less apparent, though less praiseworthy.

Why is genius alone, of all orders of men, to be treated without mercy? why are high deserts to be made a pretence for exacting every sort of merit? and why is a defect of any to deprive them of the candour which is extended to those who have no sort of merit? It seems as if the censors said, "Having so many shining qualities,

we cannot forgive you, if you are deficient in any virtue or power." It is true, that if brilliant abilities are used habitually to throw false lights before the world for the purpose of misleading it, such wickedness ought not to be excused or forgiven. But occasional aberrations may be looked upon with candour and mercy.

It is assumed by the narrow and mean-minded that a man's talents are given him merely for the direction of his own individual conduct, and his own selfish interests,—mistaking into the bargain craft for wisdom. Now all great talents are given as lamps to others: and we must examine them with reference to the public, — not to the possessor's private concerns. He whose mind is absorbed by the public may overlook the petty interests which regard himself. What is called good sense is commonly nothing more than a sense turned to mean and petty objects. He whose mind is occupied with little things, can never extend it to great ones.

That there is in the world a great deal of false pretension to genius, every one must be aware; and that the false often gains more temporary encouragement than the true. When an author dresses up old and often trite thoughts with tawdry ornaments, on which he imposes the name of imagination and invention, I call it false pretension to genius: I say that a man of talent, art, and labour, may do this without genius; and

that it will never produce the charm which is given by genius; that is a sort of indefinable charm;—a spirit which breathes we know not how or whence. A main distinction of it is the absence of artifice. It comes direct from the fountain of the internal inborn spirit; it does not concern itself with illustrations, but with original thoughts and emotions; it relates its visions and waking dreams; it communicates what it experiences and believes; and thus, by its freedom from affectation, awakens the instantaneous sympathy of others. They who have nothing within them to be awakened, may prefer exaggerated images, and strong colouring, and varnish, which they may call splendour.

I have little relish for these forced productions, and it appears to me that they are but vain and empty toils. I know not what they teach, unless that much labour may be spent to produce useless ornament. To open the recesses of the mind and the heart, is to open a book of inestimable curiosity. But what do we gain by pictures of fanciful or fantastic similitude? and how is the sober imagination gratified by pictures which it knows to be artificial and impossible? Was this the way by which Homer or Virgil delighted us? Is this the spell of Shakspeare or any great dramatic poet?

They who are far-fetched in their thoughts, are apt to be obscure, and to wander from the truth.

Light flashes upon genius, and it lives in a blaze and a flame. It throws an atmosphere of warmth around it, which imparts itself to those who come within its reach. It is always desirable to discourage charlatanism and pseudo-magic, and withdraw the tinsel robe from the gewgaw efforts of would-be wits. The native imagination sees the created globe and all its grandeurs and beauties, with the skies that surround it, not in artificial dresses, but in all their simple nakedness.

How is it then that there is so little pure and genuine poetry? This is a serious wonder with me, which all my meditations will not enable me adequately to account for. Fashion and bad models go some way towards it: but there are good models also;—why have not these been followed? Is it the extreme rarity of powerful and right genius? I can scarcely think that the gift is so rare, though the bringing its fruits to maturity is so uncommon.

So long as poetry is treated as a production, which may be brought forth by rule and mechanical art, it will in every age depart from its true course, character, and tone. No pains or skill can supply the proper thoughts of poetry, except by borrowing; and what is borrowed is faint and worthless. It is for this reason that what is unnatural, and therefore unpoetical, is resorted to.

I know not how it is, but when we take up

the works of secondary poets, though they appear the same as their superiors in outward form to the eye and ear, there is a deadness in them which makes us soon lay them down again. Look how striking this distinction is between Lord Buckhurst's article and all the rest in the "Mirror for Magistrates!" Wherever *materiam superat opus*, there can be no real charm. But the difference is in the glow on one side;—the cold, heavy labour on the other: a sort of creeping obstructed drop by drop, which do not run into one another, instead of an impetuous and unbroken current. This is so, because it is extorted from a barren and dry brain, which draws its borrowed stream with difficulty from distant sources. It cannot be accounted for from the imperfect state of the language, for the language was sufficient to serve Spenser and Shakspeare; and where will a greater vigour and flow be found than in these great poets!

The "Mirror for Magistrates" is, indeed, a practical proof of the rarity of the poetical power, which can scarcely be disputed. Here are numerous writers, all aspirants to the laurel, and many of them of some reputation; yet, with all their endeavours, not one, except Buckhurst, succeeds. The subjects, too, afforded ample room for good poetry; and it is strange how they could have missed it!

CHAPTER VI.

Death of Mr. Barrett of Lee—Short account of his family—His father—His own character—Wyatt's alterations of the house at Lee —Sir Paul Barrett—Sir George Ent—Sir Richard Head—The author's eldest son—Facts—Abstract speculations—Study of the human mind—Acquired knowledge—Method and labour—Imagination and sentiment—The heart—Difference between an illustrative and originating imagination—Burke—Coldness of secondary poets — Accusation that unchecked opinions are crude and erroneous — Natural eloquence—Incidents to genius—Advice—Shakspeare and Pope—Johnson—Power of imagination and reason compared— Matter-of-fact philosophers—Similes and metaphors—An invisible world—Necessity of knowing the mental qualities proper to be nursed—Genius put into jeopardy by envy and malice—Johnson's detraction of Gray—Influence of Johnson's "Lives"—His piquancy —Power of generalization—Vagueness—Discrimination—Exaggeration, praise, and high-flown admiration—An unmeaning flourish of Pope.

Thomas Barrett, Esq. of Lee Priory, near Canterbury, maternal uncle to the mother of my eldest son, died in January, 1803, aged fifty-nine, and left his estates and name to this son, then in his minority, being only in his fourteenth year. Mr. Barrett was the great-grandson of Sir Paul Barrett of Lee, serjeant-at-law, recorder of Canterbury, and M.P. for New Romney, in the reign of Charles II. His father, Thomas Barrett, Esq.

of the same place, died in 1758, and was of *virtù*, eminent for his taste in the arts, and made a good collection of paintings, books, and antiquities. He had a large fortune, and lived in a very handsome manner. He married four times—all heiresses. His first wife was a daughter of Sir William Boys, a physician of Canterbury, of the ancient family of Boys, who was his first-cousin; his second the sole heir of Dr. Peter Delapierre, or Peters, of the Black Friars, Canterbury, whose family came from Gorne in Flanders in the time of Charles I., and had an act of parliament to naturalize them; his third, the only child of Hercules Baker, Esq. M.P., and treasurer of Greenwich Hospital; his fourth, the heir of Captain Pudan of the navy, by the co-heir of Sir Richard Willys, Bart. Mr. Barrett was the only child of the last wife. His sister was by the second wife: she married the Rev. William Digwas Byrche,* who died in March, 1792, aged sixty-two, and died herself in July, 1798, aged seventy. She inherited her mother's fortune.

* Mr. Byrche was in all respects an amiable and excellent man. He was a divine, a classical scholar, and a man of science. He had a strict conscience, deep piety, active charity, and a mild amiable temper. His manners were gentle, and his habits of life innocent and simple. He loved literature, and cultivated it to the last. He passed through life with untainted virtue, and died suddenly without a struggle at his house in the Black Friars, Canterbury, where his wife's ancestors, the Delapierres, had resided from the time of Charles I.

Mr. Barrett was, like his father, highly accomplished in the arts, and devoted to them. He new-modelled his seat at Lee, after the designs of Mr. James Wyatt, in the Gothic form, at a vast expense; and this seat was thence generally allowed to be one of the most beautiful specimen's of Wyatt's architectural genius, and was so held by Lord Orford.* Lee is situated in the parish of Ickham, about four miles from Canterbury, on the verge of the great turnpike-road to Sandwich and Deal. Mr. Barrett lived very handsomely, and prided himself on his regard to etiquette and outward appearance. His manners were polished, perhaps a little finical; and he had something of the fastidiousness of Lord Orford and Gray, with both of whom he was intimate. One of his most intimate friends through life was the Rev. Norton Nicolls, Gray's correspondent—a very clever man, with a great deal of erudition;† but, it must be confessed, a supreme coxcomb. Mr. Barrett was quick and accomplished, with an exact and minute memory; but had not the stronger capacities of the mind. He was, however, in all respects a good and amiable man, of high honour and integrity, who discharged every duty of life without a stain, and prided himself upon correctness in all

* See a note to Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting," edition about 1786; and see Hasted's "History of Kent."

† See Mathias's character of him in J. Nichols's "Anecdotes."

his conduct. He sat in parliament a few months for Dover, in 1773, after a severe and expensive contest with Mr. Trevanion, on the death of Sir Thomas Hales.

Sir Paul Barrett's last wife and widow was the daughter and heir of the celebrated physician Sir George Ent, the pupil and biographer of Dr. William Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood. She had been previously married to Mr. Head, who died before his father Sir Richard Head, the first baronet of that family, and by him was mother of Sir Francis Head, whose daughter was my maternal grandmother; so that there was an alliance between the families of Barrett and Brydges previous to my first marriage in January, 1786. My eldest son, on coming of age, took the name of Barrett by sign-manual; and in 1826 succeeded to a company, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, in the Grenadier Guards. He was born in June, 1789.

I do not undertake to say that these are facts important to the illustration of the life of a literary man; but some facts the public will have, for I am well aware that they will not be content with nothing but abstract speculations, to which for my own part I am much more inclined. To me the delightful study is the mind in all its faculties, varieties, and movements, and to determine what faculties are the best, and how to manage them.

These are very nice and subtle inquiries, and on which the common opinions seem to me at great variance with the truth.

It is a prevailing supposition that he who has the most acquired knowledge is the most powerful intellectualist. Now acquired knowledge, laid upon springs which are not sufficient to bear it up, is an evil. Talent, if not genius, is required to turn it to account. It is a favourite doctrine, however, that method and labour may do all. Let us look at men formed by the advantage of official technicalities. Whenever they come to the trial, whenever the road is not beat out for them, they fail. Then knowledge incumbers and misleads them, because they do not know how to apply it.

I have never yet read a psychological treatise which has entirely satisfied me; and in connexion with it, and for the same reasons, no disquisition on poetry has entirely come up to my ideas. Essentials are taken as secondaries, and secondaries as essentials. Too much stress is always laid upon art. And that indefinable charm, which results from the breath of inspired and unprompted genius, is less regarded than one could suppose possible. The very easy and unstudied flow, which is its delight, is taken to be want of mastery. The imagination is an independent power which will not obey any command; her operations

must be voluntary. Yet for this very reason, and because they are natural, many deem them to have less merit.

Sometimes imagination and sentiment are bestowed without any great degree of the rationative faculty. They may still produce beautiful creations, but not of the very grandest order. The reason is wanted to judge and give a depth of thought.

There is an imagination which cannot originate, but can only add. These are fitted to write historical poems and romances. There is nothing of origination in common prose-fictions or novels; they are a mere jumble, and shifted combination of common facts and common characters, or they are a copy of vulgar gossip, vulgar dialogues, and vulgar manners.

A pure and unmixed imagination is so rare that it is difficult to name an instance of it. Almost all Shakspeare's stories and plots, and many of his characters, were borrowed; but still he gave to them a life and spirit of his own; so that what he did could scarcely be called mere additions. Indeed he stands by himself in every thing, putting at defiance all rules and all speculations.

The heart is a safe test by which the productions of the mind that address the imagination may be tried, and by which all the morality of the head may also be tried. If the heart does not acknowledge and respond to them, I shall be unwilling to admit their propriety. The human

heart always echoes back the voice of truth. If the heart does not respond, the head will not believe; and without the power to impose belief, of what interest are the fictions of imagination?

Persons of poetical power, and persons of poetical temperament, even without the power, live upon imagination. Without the aid of imagination, existence would be insufferably insipid to them. It is this power which gives all the tints and all the charms. Tear it away, and the spell which invests things is gone; all is then hard, and ugly, and repulsive. It is through this spell that every rural sight and sound makes our bosoms vibrate with pleasure. Hence female beauty enraptures, and all our senses awaken internal commotion. It gives us what abundant wealth and worldly prosperity cannot give, and all material blessings cannot supply.

But, as the imaginative faculties are of different classes, this spell does not operate equally in all. I am not sure what its effect may be on a mere illustrative rather than an originating imagination. This also may be said to invest objects with ideal splendour; but as it is a companion, rather than an identity, it cannot have the same effect. It may more address the understanding, but not equally bewitch the fancy. But the surprising thing is, that many think this sort of imagination more brilliant than the other, and the proof of a greater genius. This perhaps may be because they mis-

take the dress for the form which it invests. This is the sort of imagination which makes authors witty, rhetorical, or metaphysical poets. This adorns Burke's oratory beyond all others; but I cannot doubt that if he had applied his mind to original creation he could have accomplished that also.

There is in the greater part of secondary poets a coldness, which must have arisen from an artificial imagination. What is done by technical labour can have no life. He who is occupied to polish syllables, and harmonize sentences, and to search likenesses in dissimilitudes, must have the *sang froid* of dulness itself.

Others may hold contrary doctrines—that unchecked opinions and first impressions are always crude and often erroneous, and that the best artist is the greatest genius.

Natural eloquence rarely grows obsolete: what was written unaffectedly two hundred years ago, very little differs from modern language.

These are positions important to be ascertained or refuted, because both the conduct of authors and judgment of readers depend upon them. Persons of the quality of mind which I call genius will never submit to discipline, toil, and restraint; and, if these are required of them, they will not write at all. But he who resolves to write must listen to no one's advice—he must go on in

his own way. Advice is rarely sincere; and if sincere, never judicious. Whether flattery or censure, it generally arises from unfair motives. But, if general principles and just distinctions be clearly established, the effect of wrong criticisms will be much more easily counteracted, and the capriciousness of wilful opinion robbed of its sting. If my theory on these subjects is wrong, Shakspeare must be degraded from his supremacy, and Pope must stand at the head of all English poets.

That Johnson, with all his acuteness and force of talent, has done more harm than good to our national poetry cannot, I think, be doubted. The predominant result of all his doctrines is this—that the school of Dryden and Pope is the best. He has admirably described the characteristics of that school, and conferred upon them all the praise that his powerful language could give; but I do not admit that he has made out the pre-eminence which he wished to demonstrate. Before I can admit that, I must admit that observance is better than invention, and ratiocination than sentiment. If it could be proved that the imaginative faculty is of a lower grade than reason, and less conducive to the discovery of truth, then Johnson's poetical canons would be unanswerable.

I contend, however, that the reverse is correct, and that a sound imagination can picture out our

mingled being of spirituality and materialism much better than reason. Reason takes microscopic views of things, and cannot at once have before it expansive prospects.

The imagination weaves a web of her own; she weaves with materials taken—partly at least—from the world around her; but the web must be of one piece, not patchwork forcibly sewed together.

The frozen brain of the matter-of-fact philosopher will argue that a poet's visions are but the shadows of things shaped after his own whim; and that they are but an empty delusion producing false enchantments. But this can only be said of poetry which is not genuine: if they do not pay a strict regard to verisimilitude, they are not poetry. The mischievous principle is, that the poet is to tell nothing of which the eyes, ears, and hands have not cognisance. This damps all inspiration, and strikes at the essence of poetry.

If the idea to be conveyed is not poetry, the dress or ornament of language cannot make it so: and what consecutive series of invention can there be in similes and metaphors? Therefore they distract the mind, and leave it bewildered by unconnected flashes. The poetry of diction, where there is poverty of thought, is a meretriciousness which soon loathes. He who uses artificial tricks is not a magician but an impostor.

In addition to the material world, there is an invisible world around us; and it is the poet's business to bring this out, which he can only do by the force of imagination. But with this gift few are endowed in a sufficient degree of brightness—their mental sight is not strong enough to endure the dazzle. If few are qualified, they who are qualified ought to be encouraged and cheered. As to writing verses, that is a very easy task, if it be not necessary to put a poetical spirit into them.

In discussing the characters of those destined to take a lead among mankind, these investigations cannot be useless. Till we know precisely the qualities and faculties proper to be nursed, how can we judge how to manage our own minds, or how to stimulate those of others? Of how many children is the genius suppressed by checking what ought to be prompted, and prompting what ought to be checked! If there be the poetical faculty and temperament, it must be allowed to take its course, otherwise it will turn to poison.

But envy, jealousy, and the other malignant passions which have dominion over mankind, combined with conceited ignorance, put the bloom of genius into perpetual jeopardy. Sometimes it will work its own way in spite of them all; but it often perishes by crosses and injuries. The symptoms of deep intellectual capacity do not

show themselves to common observers; while the mind is working in silence, and preparing itself for future efforts; the gravity is mistaken by many for inactivity and dulness — while light heads reflect easily what is only received upon the surface.

Boldness is a quality with which genius is not always endowed; it yields to frowns, and is paralysed by objections. It is often of too delicate and morbid a nature to support rudeness, and droops and sinks before the blast or the shower. It invites insult by its susceptibility, and provokes attack by the mortification it inflicts on incapacity. But its worst enemies are some of its own tribe, stirred on by the direful passions of envy and detraction.

Thus Johnson said, that "Gray's Poems were the productions of the hotbed—which yet were but cucumbers after all!"—and thus he speaks of the divine "Odes" of Collins as failures, even while he records with fondness his personal friendship, and speaks of his amiableness, his talents, and his learning, with the warmest admiration. So he treats Lyttelton and Shenstone with a coarse contempt, generated by the clouds of an evil temper. Whether he bent his rules of criticism to his own passions and desires, or whether his erroneous opinions arose from mental blindness, his authority on these topics is equally invalid.

Perhaps no work has had so much influence on the literary opinions of my time as Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," and none therefore more imperiously demands comment. To have retained so much notice and influence is a proof of great power; yet that power will not always bear analysis. His humour is always coarse, and his style is often heavy. His pomp is less conspicuous than in some of his former writings, but still it abounds. When he attempts to be familiar, it is commonly the familiarity of a pedagogue. He has no sentiment or feeling, and little imagery. Its whole spirit is not to exalt but to degrade—not to make the heart glow with admiration, but to bring the high to a level with the low. He seems to write with a view to gratify the mean passions of the mob, by instilling the *nil admirari*.

I suspect that one of the great holds upon the public has been the piquancy of his criticisms. The bitter is more pleasant to the multitude than the sweet; and when others are pulled down the obscure think themselves exalted. It is a sort of literary radicalism, which catches the appetites of the mass of the people. When Johnson, as a giant, despised mediocrity, the pigmies thought themselves lifted on his shoulders. But—to show the inconsistencies of the human mind—Johnson had a servile obsequiousness to political rank and wealth. His piety forced him to express admiration of Milton's great poem; but he exerted all his

strength, all his ingenuity, and all his heavy and clumsy wit, to degrade the man. His criticism on "Paradise Lost" is powerful and discriminative, but it is not equal to Addison's.

To generalise shows a great power of mind; but Johnson's generalisation often extends to vagueness. In this there is sometimes a delusive sort of ingenuity, in which there is more of show than of instruction and deep thought. "The Ramblers" are full of this; and stale truisms are often dressed in a pompous rotundity of words, which are mistaken for the oracles of original wisdom. They form a strong contrast to the simple style of Cowper, who is full of observation and precision of ideas. Compare them also with the style of Gray's "Letters"—who, when he carelessly describes the scenery of nature, gives distinctly in a few brief touches every leading feature.

There is a great deal of this vagueness in the "Tour to the Hebrides;" but there it sometimes produces grandeur and sublimity. If Johnson's mind had been incapable of producing precise ideas, this vagueness would detract from the fame of his intellectual superiority: but it was the contrary: no one could discriminate with more acuteness and more originality. He could at once separate the true from the false, and unravel the most complex ideas. In the description of material objects his power might be less, because his

sight was imperfect, and his sensibility to the beauties of nature obtuse. It was in intellectual distinctions that he was pre-eminently strong and ready. But it was in later life that these powers grew and improved upon him, as he was thrown more into society, and was stimulated by the collisions of conversation. He had, when unexcited, a morbid indolence and stagnant gloom.

In answer to these censures of Johnson's "Lives," I am aware that many will be ready to object that nothing is more fulsome than exaggerated praise and high-flown admiration. But why go from one extreme to another? I do not oppose severe criticism where it is just; but I oppose uncandid severity grounded on false principles. Why withhold praise where it is deserved? Even some small over-measure is an error on the generous side. The world are enough inclined to decry:—intellectual eminence wants some cheers and some shield. There is a favourite couplet of Pope on every one's lips:

> A wit 's a feather, and a chief a rod,—
> An honest man 's the noblest work of God!

It is one of those unmeaning flourishes thrown out *ad captandam vulgus*. An honest man, unless he be intellectual, is not only not the noblest, but not even a noble work of God. And why should a wit or a chief be less honest than a meaner-minded or meaner-conditioned man?

CHAPTER VII.

Author's pursuit of French and Italian bibliography—New ideas from a fixed residence on the Continent—English herd too much with each other abroad—Pride of the English—This offends other nations—Mere change of scenery soon loses its effect—Outward differences soon disappear from notice—National characteristics—An independent mind fitted for all countries—Distinction between love of country and bigotry—Inconveniences of a distance from England—Removal from English literature—Present time abused, but not unfavourable to literature—Forgetfulness of friends—Difficulty of detaching one's affections from one's native spot—Hasty travellers—Mont-Blanc and Vesuvius—The value of power of thinking—Powers enlarge as the field of observation enlarges—Author's "Recollections of Foreign Travel"—His poem of "The Lake of Geneva"—Occupations at Paris—"Stemmata Illustria"—"Anglo-Genevan Journal"—Idleness intolerable to the author—His health and dangerous illnesses—His walks—His seclusion—Regrets at misapplication of time—Self-knowledge—Submission to blights—Qualities calculated for success—Ridicule—No one can please all—Johnson's detracting spirit—Gray—Anecdote of Gray and Johnson—Geniuses need not jostle each other—Unequal distributions of Providence—Genius ought to come forth—The author fell on unpropitious times—Native powers have a decisive bent—Some deny talents where there is a want of practical prudence—Craft and disguise reprobated—Wickedness not finally successful—Talents not calculated for show—Author's irritability and frankness—A man of business—We cannot command among whom our lot shall fall—There is wickedness and fraud from which no prudence can escape—Author's ill-luck in this respect—The detail of private affairs must not be indulged—Necessity of firmness—Success, a proof of merit with the world.

At one time I amused myself with French literature, and at another with Italian, and made my-

self tolerably acquainted with the bibliography of each country, as I had formerly done of English—but I have given over all those things now; and, as my memory is very fugitive, I remember but little about them. Innumerable trains of new ideas have of course passed my mind during the twelve or thirteen years I have lived upon the Continent. It will be strange indeed if it has produced no enlargement of mind and novelty of observation. Habits and manners to which one was wedded, have given way; and local prejudices, which darken the opinions, have been entirely obliterated.

It is the fault of the English, however, when they come abroad, still to live too much with one another. As islanders, it is long before we entirely abandon our strong peculiarities, and our conceit of the exclusive superiority of all our own modes and customs and ideas. The English are only esteemed proud by other nations, but really are so. The consequence is, that though they are feared, they are little loved by them. At first the mere change of scenery pleases the English traveller; but when the freshness goes off he tires, till a second habit, if he stays long enough, reconciles him.

These little differences of appearance and etiquette which strike at first, soon cease to attract notice; and I have been accustomed to see individuals of so many nations congregated, that they

no longer excite my attention. There are, no doubt, moral and natural characteristics, mental and bodily, which belong to every country. For instance, the Italians have certainly more poetical imagination than the French; and the French more *esprit* than the Italians. They have moral differences equally marked. The Swiss are distinct from both, and have less imagination or sentiment than either. They have more *sang froid*, and perhaps more laboriousness. They love the sciences rather than the belles-lettres, and are accurate in matters of fact. I believe the Cantons differ from one another. The upper Cantons are, indeed, half German. The Genevans are a mixed race of French, Germans, Italians, &c., and even some small infusion of English, Scotch, and Irish; but notwithstanding the settlement of the English refugees, when they fled from the restoration of popery by Queen Mary, I find no English name here; nor any family confessedly descended from a male English stock.

A man of an independent mind, who frees himself from little passions, and has a competence to support him, can live in any country where the climate is good; and, in flying from one's native soil, one flies from many pangs of torn affections and broken friendships. The thoughts thus expatiate like the wings of a caged bird when turned into the free air. In one sense it is good to be a citizen of the world, though not to have lost all

patriotism. Between love of country and bigotry to it, there is a clear interval. For instance, the laws of England have not the superiority we attribute to them. If in a great part the principle is good, the machinery is complex and corrupt, and the expense not only destructive of the ends of justice but ruinous. The judges are able, skilful, and honest; but the lower classes of practitioners the very worst and most heartless members of society. The acuteness and manliness of the Bar is excellent, and calculated to keep the Bench in order, were they willing to stray.

With regard to political opinions and political constitutions, all the chief countries of Europe are now in such communication, that on these topics intelligent minds are every where approaching to each other. No one defends despotism in the abstract; and every one advocates liberty in the abstract, though he may differ from another about the means. But it would be quite impossible to enter here into the wide ocean of general politics.

One of the evils to me of a distance from England has been the inconvenient removal from its literature of the day, in which I always took an intense interest. I cannot immediately get at modern publications; and not at all, but at an enormous expense.

It is man's nature always to complain of the present time; but I do not believe that more

amusing and instructive books have ever been published than in the last few years. There are also many superficial, charlatanic, and corrupt ones; but so there have always been. Then the improvement in the art of printing and engraving, and in the embellishment of books, produces a splendour which was never exhibited before.

If poetry is out of fashion, it is a popular whim which will veer round again. There is no reason for it: though Byron and Scott are dead, there are several living writers with great poetical power.

But a separation from domestic literature is but one of many serious deprivations in a long absence from one's country. There are other melancholy considerations attending it. Who can pronounce without deep sighs the celebrated line—

Oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis?

There are a few in whose hearts impressions are profound, and not easily rooted up; but this is not the case with the mass of mankind. They are light and airy; and figures cast upon them are like the track of a boat upon the sea—no sooner made than gone.

Many years had passed before I could untie a most narrow and irrational affection to the spot of my nativity, and before I could think that I could find happiness any where else. All that sort of prejudice, however deep it was, is erased now. But we have had many great men who never

emerged from their own country—Pope, I believe, never quitted England; Johnson never got beyond Paris. Horace says,

Cœlum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt.

But this is not strictly true: in many respects a great and important change of mind is effected. Not indeed by a hasty tour, by posting from city to city, slightly inspecting churches and palaces, and back again; nor do I think that much is gained to the mind even by ascending Mont-Blanc or Vesuvius: but in a long and calm familiarity with characters, manners, laws, and literature of other countries, much is surely gained.

The power of thinking is the greatest distinction of the highest class of humanity. He who passes the subjects worthy of notice, which daily present themselves, without reflection, opinion, or sentiment, scarcely deserves the name of man. But I am convinced that a very large number cannot justly be said to think. If they express any opinions they are merely borrowed, and spoken like a parrot.

But to feel with quickness and depth, to ruminate profoundly, and to come to accurate conclusions, is not only a virtue and an honour, but a duty—as far as lies within the powers bestowed by nature—for many have no capacity for it, having an insensible heart and inapprehensive brain. Nor let those flatter themselves who merely

load their memories with what is dictated to them by the books or conversations of others. The total want is almost as well, for it is little better than impertinence.

It will be strange if the wider the field of observation, the mind does not become the more enlightened. I can hardly suppose that in the fifteen years since I first took up my abode on the Continent I have not gained a great accession of knowledge, and at least some increased strength of intellect. In age perhaps one does not so easily improve as in youth: but how Lord Byron's genius brightened and became invigorated by his residence in Switzerland and Italy! I doubt whether he would have produced one of his finest poems if he had continued to reside in England.

In my "Recollections of Foreign Travel," (in two volumes, 8vo. 1825,) I have given an account of my movements, opinions and feelings, which it would be improper to repeat here, and which must be taken as part of my life. I went over nearly the same ground which Rogers went over almost at the same date. Those "Recollections" bring my diary down to about November, 1824, when I arrived at Paris from Geneva. I remained at Paris till June, 1826, when I returned to England, and remained till the 1st of November, 1828. I then passed again to Paris, and arrived once more at Geneva on the 15th November following.

In May and June, 1831, I wrote my Poem on "The Lake of Geneva" in seven books; and in that may be found a continuation of my sentiments and thoughts.

At Paris I occupied myself much among the magnificent riches of the Royal library, and there I compiled and printed my "Stemmata Illustria," folio, 1825, for the purpose of showing between two and three hundred descents from Charlemagne through different channels. In this laborious work I have taken much pains to ascertain the true origin of the Royal Houses of France and Austria; and the work may in other respects be found useful to all European genealogists and historians. I only printed a hundred copies, solely for private distribution.

One more work I have printed since my return to Geneva, which, though miscellaneous, may give perhaps some slight information or amusement to critical and biographical readers. I entitled it "The Anglo-Genevan Journal, for 1831," two vols. small 8vo., meaning to continue it; but I found the trouble and expense of sending the copies to England too great, and there could be no sale here for an English work sufficient to pay any part of the expenses. I have also printed here other things, of which I shall probably give a list at the end of this volume.

My mind will not endure idleness; and when left to its thoughts on individual concerns it preys

upon its own vitals. Intellectual employment therefore I must always have, even though I incur the censure of the *cacoethes scribendi*. My health is various, and has been at times for months together in a very dangerous state. In 1819 at Geneva, 1820 at Florence, and again at Geneva in 1829, 1830, and 1831, I was attacked by complaints which few thought I could survive. I am at this moment well, and can take my daily walks, though of course somewhat feeble under the weight of years.

I am now a recluse, thinking myself entitled to consult my own ease and tranquil habits, and to throw off all the vanities of the world; leaving others to make such comments on my appearance and my peculiarities as they choose without feeling any annoyance on my part. I dress as I like, keep my own hours, and conform to the world in nothing.

I do not justify those years I spent in researches into our old English literature; I think they might have been better employed. I regret that I did not more apply them to original composition, especially to works of imagination, because in those researches I was only doing what any one by mere toil could do. Now I have the presumption and arrogance to suppose that I was fitted by nature to do things which many could not do. I attribute something to my warmth of tempera-

ment and mental enthusiasm;—and, though imagination is a quality which many have not been willing to concede to me, I know what is in me, and know that it is a light which is constantly playing before me without seeking for it. I lament, therefore, that of the innumerable visions which through life have haunted me, a larger portion have not been embodied.

I attribute it in great measure to having suffered myself to be discouraged by the blights and malice of the world. To have submitted to it was a cowardice amounting to a great mental fault. It is of the essence of genius to be bold and defiant—without it, it can do nothing great: discouragement and censure are as certain as that the night will follow the day.

I admit that we must assume, that he who can exert boldness with success has in him the qualities to excel. He who is bold without power is rash, and will assuredly have a fall. But he who is strong does not always know his own strength, and then opposition is perilous and sometimes fatal to him. It always happens that, however vehemently and ingeniously merit may be attacked, perseverance will overcome the injury; and no ridicule ought to check one, because "ridicule is not the test of truth." But then to stand firm against ridicule requires nerves which few possess. That possession Wordsworth has nobly

shown, and thus triumphed over all the virulent assailments to which he has so strangely been subjected.

No one can please all;—the flatterer and the satirist, the gentle and the rude, cannot coalesce. See how insulting Johnson is to some of his contemporaries, whom the public have finally agreed to place in the high ranks of fame. Johnson's love of detraction often amounted to immorality. Gray himself was fastidious, and a little inclined to depreciate his contemporaries. It is a prevailing passion, and few literary men are free from it; but I cannot refrain from avowing that it is a very base one. I was always struck with the manner in which Gray speaks of Akenside's "Pleasures of Imagination," and of Shenstone's "Poems," and even of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," of which all that he says is, that it has a few good stanzas.

Bonstetten told me, that when he was walking one day with Gray in a crowded street of the city (about 1769), a large uncouth figure was rolling before them, upon seeing which Gray exclaimed, with some bitterness, "Look, look, Bonstetten!—the great bear!—There goes *Ursa Major!*" This was Johnson: Gray could not abide him. It must be confessed that he had but little reason to look upon the sturdy lexicographer with reverence.

There is certainly room enough in the world for

all the geniuses that ever have appeared, or ever will appear. They need not jostle each other. There is no motive therefore for exercising this ingenuity to find causes to decry. Genius may be cherished without excluding another from the place to which he aspires. Yet, however supererogatory, detraction will still prevail.

Still the fate of man is different: some are born to more ill-usage and more exposure to blights, frosts, and blasts than others, while from an excess of sensitiveness they can less bear them. Our destinies in this life are surely not equally balanced. Some have found friends, and cheers, and praise, and exaltation, who do not seem very well to have deserved them; while others, with innocence, and energy, and capacity, have been thwarted at every step.

When it really does happen that an individual is endowed with those mental faculties which merit the name of genius, it is unlucky both for him and the world that they are not brought out. He is never happy when they smoulder within. No one will find them out for him, if he does not find them out himself. It is idle to suppose that they will come out as a matter of course. It is by gradations of trials that the fleetest race-horse commonly wins the post.

It so happened, I think, that the literary fashion of the time was unpropitious to the character of

my mind. There was more of glare and eccentricity and wonder, than I had taste or power for. I never could submit to those labours and artifices, and those gaudy colours, and that varnish, by which a false splendour is given to poetry or prose fiction; nor could I go to the contrary extreme of nakedness and crude licentiousness. They who accustom their eyes to a modern gallery of pictures, where all is freshness and glare and violence of colouring, do not look with pleasure on the mellow tints and natural forms of the old masters.

Where the fruits are to come from native powers each one has a character and bent of his own. The faculties are combined in varying proportions, and according to those which are predominant will be the cast of character. Shut to him the path fitted for him, and the chances are that he will never come forward at all. And then no one will believe that nature gave him any powers above the common.

There is no opinion more common than that there is nothing in talents when they are not combined with what is called practical prudence. The question is, what is practical prudence? I believe that nothing is meant by it but craft and disguise. If Providence permits the affairs of the world to be carried on successfully only in this way, then talents are not wisdom. But I am willing to persuade myself that wickedness has

only partial success; and that Satan has not an absolute and unlimited dominion over the world. As long as this which is styled practical prudence prevails, it is not sufficient to know what is right, but what is expedient; and when expedience is admitted, what rule, principle, or faith have we to depend upon? Then enters self-interest—and when the door is opened to that, who is secure of any thing in which others can interfere?

Surely Providence does not give talents merely for the purpose of show and talk, without the power to influence actions, and control injustice and fraud. We may indeed suppose men to be sometimes theoretically wise, without the temper and firmness to put their opinions into execution with skill. This is the want of a sort of practical prudence, which is not at all inconsistent with the highest abilities.

I confess that I am myself of that irritable and frank temperament, which unfits me to be that sort of person who is vulgarly denominated a man of business. To be a man of business one must be cunning, reserved, plausible, deceitful, "with an open countenance and close thoughts." But this does not require talent—rather the reverse.

Some men fall by a train of unavoidable circumstances into misfortunes out of which no human wisdom can extricate them. Villany may take its opportunities, which, though it would not succeed in common cases, it may be impossible to resist. A single mind might counteract; but when

it has to play off more than one mind, it may turn to its own account the conflicting virtues of each. Satan has his emissaries, whom Providence permits to prowl for prey among mankind.

Will any one contend that it is in the power of an individual to choose in all cases among whom his lot shall be cast? Then are there not those from whom neither talents, nor virtue, nor courage, nor innocent prudence can defend one? To deny that the wicked prosper, is as if one should deny that the storm is strong.

But it is as criminal as it is brutal to oppose the truth of theoretical wisdom, because the baseness of mankind sometimes defeats its benefits in practice. Let those who have passed safely and calmly through life, without having been exposed by their fate to extraordinary trials, snares, and afflictions, refrain from too much conceit and arrogance at their good luck. It may not have been to their own merit or sense that their even tenour has been due.

It is the decree of Providence that some should have for ever to struggle against the stream. It would be vain to attempt to account for these mysteries of seeming inequality—we only know that they are. And he who gainsays them is struggling against facts of daily proof.

Such has been the order of Heaven, under which I have had to battle my way for numberless years. By complex means the foully dishonest have succeeded against me in spite of all my

insight into their designs, and my indignant repulsion of them. My own temper would have led me to wage war with them, even to the death. I am long before I suspect; but when I have proof—damning proof—then I say forbearance should be thrown away. I would not vex myself about little robberies; but all experience proves, that if we overlook little frauds, great ones will follow in an accumulating succession; as a hound that draws the first drop of blood, will never cease till he has drunk up the whole vital stream.

The exposure of the details of private affairs cannot with propriety be carried into all its particulars; and thus I forbear to relate the course of events which gave the lever for my being betrayed into the ambushes of these "lappers of the blood of human misfortune and sorrow;"—these reckless devourers with voracious appetites, and unrelenting and untired claws.

We must proceed firmly onward, regardless of perverse comments;—for do what we will, every thing will most certainly be misconstrued. He who injures one, almost always at the same time aggravates the injury by libelling one. Non-success is not a mere loss of benefits or rights, but brings on a prejudice against every act, thought, and quality of the unfortunate man. Success is a matter of fact which all can understand: the causes, movements, and progress of things few can understand.

CHAPTER VIII.

Literary acquaintance of the author at Geneva—Bonstetten's death —Two elegies on him—A mere list of names uninstructive—Discrimination of characters necessary—Anecdotes deceitful—Men should be spoken of as they are—Power of drawing characters—Originality—Genevan want of imagination—Scenery—English at Geneva—Literary men should court retirement—Pleasure and benefits of retirement—Cowley—His admirable "Essays"—Light prattle—Necessary to bring forth what lies at the bottom—Autobiography—Lord Orford—Gray—Lives of inferior men—How far Pope's life is known—He could have told much more of himself—So, many other eminent men—Dryden—Autobiography of Byron —How much of deep interest he could have told—Pope's mode of life—Author's own intercourse with poetical scenes—Johnson in the Hebrides—Tasso in the vault of Ferrara—Petrarch at Vaucluse —Vulgar scepticism—Liability to misconstructions—Necessity of discriminative candour—Author's attention to scrupulous sincerity and truth—Consistent picture of mind—His love of simplicity, and hatred of floweriness—Mediocrity may succeed by charlatanism—Advantage taken of prejudices and ruling passions—Consistent standards of merit desirable—Constituents of poetry may be accurately fixed—Johnson's assertion of the difficulty of defining poetry —Too many books a mere manufacture or repetition—Process of gaining a dominion over ideas—How are ideal views embodied?—Inborn desire of knowledge—Benefits derived from the art of fixing ideas by the pen—Satisfaction of believing one's thoughts will thus survive one.

AMONG the literary men I have known at Geneva, many are dead,—as Professor Marc-Au-

guste Pictet, *ob.* 1825; his brother, Charles Pictet, *ob.* 1824; Dumont, the friend of Bentham, and author of "Les Souvenirs de Mirabeau," *ob.* 1829; Simond, *voyageur*, *ob.* 1831; Bonstetten, the friend of Gray, *ob.* February, 1832, *æt.* 87;—all eminent men. Among the living are, Sir Francis D'Ivernois, Sismondi, Professor P. Prevost, Professor Picot, Professor De Candolle, Dr. Matthey, Mons. Hesse, Professor Rossi, Mons. Grenus-Saladin, Count de Sellon, Mons. Galiffe. Sir Francis D'Ivernois continues at a great age to pursue his most useful inquiries as an European statist with admirable sagacity and precision; and his calculations of the comparative longevity of the several populations of the chief nations of Europe are instructive, original, and profound.

I was glad to know Bonstetten on account of his intimacy with our poet Gray; and I sent a short memoir of him to the "Gentleman's Magazine," which I presume found insertion.

I must confess that a mere list of names gives but little instructive information; but I am not sure that I could add any thing to the account the public already possess of those here mentioned, and I am not willing to fill my book with trite common-place. Every thing said ought either to instruct or to amuse. The opinions and the sentiments ought to have both truth and force, and something at least of the freshness of

novelty. Insipid compliments, and praise which means nothing, fill many volumes of memoirs; but discrimination of character, honestly related, is necessary to give them value. Anecdotes are very popular, but I confess I suspect that they oftener mislead than not: it rarely happens that they are not embellished, and that truth is not sacrificed to point. I frankly own that I think this is the case with no small part of Lord Orford's writings. As it is among primary knowledge to know human characters such as they have been found in real life,—in the same degree, if they have been drawn inaccurately and with false colours, is the perniciousness of the error. Men should "be spoken of as they are,—nothing extenuated, nor aught set down in malice;" but still all should be told with candour, and there should be a due mixture of light and shade to mellow the portrait.

Some few men have the gift of drawing striking and exact portraits of character, which express not only the outward visage and form, but the very soul. This is effected by a native penetration made up of the light of imagination, controlled and sharpened by observance.

In an original work it is not my practice to repeat what I hear, any more than what I read: my business is with my own opinions and remarks. It is well known that the Genevans, notwithstanding they produced Rousseau, have

little taste for works of imagination; their principal bent is towards technical studies. Looking at the scenery among which they live, this appears very surprising to me. This scenery is both magnificent and beautiful; but when I returned back from Naples in 1821, I thought it faded in the comparison.

Vast quantities of English have been here at times, and I have been acquainted with many of them; but at present I prefer my recluse life. I do not think a literary man much fitted for common conversation, or that he acts prudently in mixing indiscriminately with society. Were I to pass my life over again with my present convictions, my resolution would be to spend my days in absolute retirement, and with the simplest establishment and the most frugal wants. When free from the irritation of contending multitudes, what is pomp and show? If we mix in the mob, we do not like to be trod under foot. Still there is something delightful in the hospitable table, where we find

> The feast of reason and the flow of soul!

I have the example of Cowley for pouring out my thoughts and sentiments in this manner. His "Moral Essays" are entirely so written; and from them we know more of the interior of his character, than from all his other works and all the biographies of him. There is nothing more

beautiful in the English language, both in matter and style, than these "Essays."

Having undertaken the perilous task of giving conscientiously a true representation of my own mind, I have struggled with some anxiety to execute my design. I have gone on the assumption that what Johnson says of autobiography in the "Rambler" is just; and that even an obscure person, who tells frankly and honestly his thoughts and feelings, can thus make an interesting and instructive work. It has always seemed so to me, and I never read such a work without curiosity and pleasure; but it is essential that it should have no ambition, vanity, or varnish about it, and that sincerity should be its prime quality. Many exhibit themselves in full etiquette and ornamented costume, as if they were dressed for court. This is not to be borne. A memoir-writer may delude himself, but he must not falsify. If he does delude, the delusion forms part of his character; and he must take the consequence.

There is a sort of light prattle and gossip, of which some memoirs are made up. They are written as a man of the world, of small talent, who has cultivated the art of conversation, talks. These tell nothing but the surface of things, and that inaccurately. Careless readers, of no penetration, think they get intelligence from them; though, on the contrary, they rather encourage their previous vacancy of views. The want of

heart and want of depth in them disgusts the strong mind, which requires solid food.

But he on whom the visible and invisible world makes deep impressions, and who has a heart that trembles in accordance with the impressions of his head, cannot choose but bring forth what lies at the bottom of his inward spirit, if he once takes the pen to write about himself. He will then elicit and embody numerous ideas, which would otherwise have died in thinking.

Much of the value of what he produces will depend on the degree of his genius or ability. If his originality is powerful and his judgment sound, what he writes will be that sort of ore which will retain its use in a hundred ways. On numerous moral topics we delight to know the opinions and feelings of a thinking and strong mind, and especially to know internal movements and private convictions. Autobiography necessarily forces the attention inwards upon self; and if we have a clear sight, it is there, beyond all other subjects, in which our materials are at our own command. The heart of another we can only imagine; our own heart we must know, unless we court delusion.

Did such a man as Lord Orford represent himself what he was, or only such as he wished to appear? He was a mingled character, which it is difficult to analyze. He was frank enough in owning some of his own petty passions, but his

imagination was turned to certain classes of artificiality in manners and arts. When therefore he was frank, he was frank of artificial feelings. He had a species of aristocracy which is now gone out; perhaps too much gone out. Gray had the good part, without the bad part, of it. When Gray in his "Letters" lets out his private feelings, there is always a spell in them that electrifies. I do not recollect a single passage of this kind in Lord Orford: yet his "Castle of Otranto" is a fiction of genius, and there are in it a few touches even of pathos. He had a great portion of the French *esprit*, with more imagery; and he cultivated the love of the ridiculous with an assiduity in which there was not a little spite. He had no grand ideas, but always saw the trivial parts of another's character.

But our curiosity is not confined to a disclosure of the minds of men so eminent as these; we should be glad to know also how work far inferior intellects and bosoms,—but not equally glad, because the interest must necessarily be in proportion to the qualities of the head and heart so displayed.

It is supposed that we know all that can be known, or is required to be known, of Pope; but if he had written a Life of himself with openness and *naïveté*,—of which indeed the character of his "Letters" does not give much promise,—we should have had a hundred valuable disclosures

which are now buried in the grave. I do not think much of Spence's "Anecdotes" of the poet; they are trifling, though better than nothing, and very proper to have been preserved by the press. We know Pope's peevishness and irritability, but we cannot doubt that he had many splendid and exalted feelings; and his acuteness and sagacity rendered his opinions of the human character invaluable. He must have been acquainted with much of his contemporaries which has never been preserved in writing,—of St. John, Harley, Addison, Swift, Prior, Gay, Congreve, Garth, Dryden, Burlington, Bathurst, Fenton, Broome, Tickell, Rowe, Arbuthnot, Warburton, &c. But Dryden wrote with more ease, more transparency, less reserve of opinion, and in a far better style of prose, than Pope; though his opinions were often fickle and unsettled. Pope could never have suffered himself to appear in *deshabille*—he was too keenly alive to the opinions of the world.

It may have been well that those "Memoirs of Byron" by himself, which were given by him to Moore, were burned; but Byron could have written an autobiography better than any other author I could name. No poet ever looked so deeply and so brilliantly into himself: he evoked all the hundred spirits within him, and they answered to his call—he tore the fugitive secrets of the soul from their hiding-places, and brought

them out to astonish the gazer, and make him tremble or glow. That he often felt more violently than others, whether the passion was good or evil, cannot be questioned; and then his feeling was always mixed up with profound thought: and the figures of this mingled cauldron, which threw themselves out in flames of terrific grandeur, he knew how to watch, discriminate, and throw into language. These combined powers and acquirements fitted him to be the first of all autobiographers. The storm is sublimer than a clear, sunshiny, and blessed day; so was Byron's internal being grander than a bright, cheerful, genial mind and temperament. He was fierce, vindictive, and daring in anger, though crossed by flashes of benevolence and intense tenderness: he revenged insults sometimes with too unsparing retribution, so that the devil seemed to have full dominion over him for a time; but then he recovered and threw the fiend from him with a gigantic force.

Pope led a life calculated to strengthen his intellectual, but not to enrich and elevate his imaginative, faculties. He lived among wits of rank and fashion, and statesmen of powerful abilities. The age in which he lived was not an imaginative age; it was an age of reason, and good sense, and classical propriety: but whatever may be the use of these merits, they do not nurse the highest poetical flights. Byron's actual life

was a life of passion and poetry, spent in poetical scenes. So was that of Burns.

I have also spent part of my life in poetical scenes, but not in Greece like Byron. My life also has been a life of trials and incessant emotions. A dull, uniform life lets the imagination sleep and become torpid. I have no doubt that scenery and climate have a great effect upon the spiritual part of imagination, as well as upon the material. Johnson, I think, became more imaginative after he had visited the Hebrides: at any rate, when our minds contemplate him carried about on the waves of the stormy ocean in which those islands are placed, and sleeping with the northern billows beating at the feet of the castellated rock where he is hospitably received, we have a pleasing idea of him, which revolts at the disputatious dreariness and vulgarity of Bolt Court.

It is said that Tasso wrote some of his finest poetry in the dismal vault of Ferrara, which I have seen with horror. I cannot give credit to this. His wild and splendid mind was fed and furnished by his wanderings, and blazed by the troubled passions which pursued him and haunted him through his dreamy existence. In the picturesque solitude of Vaucluse, Petrarch drank in his romantic passion for Laura. Milton and Gray had visited Italy before they wrote their finest poems.

There are those who will not believe things which are before their eyes and in their hearts, because they cannot reason upon them and account for them. Thus it is sometimes with the visions of the mind, and the delight we receive from them: they say that they will not have pleasure in them because they consider them to be unsolid and fanciful. Ideal apparitions are as powerful as material realities.

While I am venturing these opinions and sentiments, I am too anxiously aware of the misconstructions which perverse ill-will may give them. They will assert or insinuate that to put myself in such company, and invest myself with such circumstances, is insane conceit or vanity. But let it be recollected that I have laboured for fifty years in my vocation, and that I have supported myself through good report and evil report,—in sorrows, calumnies, privations, and dangers of gigantic violence; and that, if I have not done all which I might have done and ought to have done, my works are still not rejected by those whose notice is fame.

We must not be too severe in allowing claims to distinction by individuals above the mass of mankind. If indeed they are too lightly conceded, distinction loses its value and essence. Yet though there may be some things not accordant to various tastes, and many things wanting which some may deem indispensable, yet if there

be a fund of thought and feeling,—if that thought be unborrowed and that feeling sincere, and if at the same time it be just and forcible,—is not such an author entitled to a candid and favourable reception?—and may he not be excused for setting himself right with the world, in opposition to contumely, error, and wilful falsehood?

How far I have preserved scrupulous sincerity and truth, others must decide; but I lay claim to them with the most earnest and undoubting protestations. I have varnished nothing, nor set forth for plausibility's sake any thoughts or sentiments which I do not privately entertain. As to the facts of private and family history which are interwoven, I defy a disproof of them. How far the public may think them of sufficient weight to be told, is not for me to determine. Almost all of them connect themselves by some link with the biographical history of the nation; nor is there scarce one of which some notice has not been taken in print before I was born; for instance,—Egerton, Gibbon, Mainwaring, Yorke, Head, Hamilton, Ent, Barrett, Robinson, Montagu, Cavendish, Stanley, Clifford, &c. &c.: so that their station in society need not depend on my representation, but may be verified by numerous authorities easily consulted by all.

As to the pictures of my own mind, it will scarcely be denied that they are consistent with the tenour of all that I have published in succes-

sion,—not interrupted by long intervals,—from January, 1784,* to this day, 30th July, 1833, wanting only five months of fifty years. I have always argued for simplicity of style in poetry, and rejection of unmeaning flowers: this, my first composition in print, to which I here allude, will prove that my practice commenced conformable to my canons.

If I had adopted more glare, and had had more violent colours, more violent imagery, and more extravagant incidents, thoughts, and reflections, I might, and am convinced I should, have attracted more notice; but I could only write what my heart dictated, and could never lash myself into foam. I am one of those who think that adventitious merits have no claim to much celebrity or favour; and that only those to whom nature has been bountiful in some high intellectual power ought to be marked out among literati. To confound with them the mere creatures of labour and the merely mediocre in talent, is to do great mischief: it depresses energy, blights hope, and fades the laurel.

Mediocrity may gain temporary reputation by charlatanism; indeed it actually does so every day, by puffs and tricks, and tinsel, and exaggeration, and flattery of popular appetites and po-

* See the "Verses to Miss L. L. on her departure," in the "Gentleman's Magazine," January, 1784.

pular passions. Nothing is more absurd and more nauseous than the paid critiques on such works, which appear in some of the minor journals; but where vendibility is the object, they answer the purpose. Unfortunately, literature is now turned to become the engine of disseminating false and mischievous political principles; and productions are praised, not for their literary merit, but to gild the pill of political poison. It is frightful to observe how much is done by *ruse*, and how little by genuine power. Every thing is done by violent contrast,—by surprise and novelty created by unnatural combinations. To bring out those nicer and hidden operations by which Nature carries on her purposes, requires other faculties, and more acute and clearer perceptions.

They who take advantage of the ruling prejudices and fashions of the moment, only make impressions, because their readers are already prepared to receive them, and meet them more than half way. When the fit of the crisis is past, every one wonders how such authors could awaken the smallest interest.

Were fame distributed by any consistent rules, even though those rules were not entirely just, authors would know what to rely upon; but we need only look at the roll of authors placed according to popular estimation, to convince us how little regard is had to any one standard. It is true that the surer judgment of more intelligent

critics, in a long course of time, new arranges the list in a more correct manner, and lets many names drop which never had pretensions to be there.

I cannot see why the constituents of poetry should not be so precisely settled, that the rank of every one who is admitted among its priesthood could be easily and unequivocally determined. Johnson says definitions are dangerous, especially of poetry; but I do not perceive either the danger or the difficulty. Johnson could define well, but in this case he had his reasons for not liking a definition: any just definition would have excluded or placed low a great many productions which he wished to admit or place high. It will be said that an author's estimation of himself, whether high or low, will not alter the character or degree of his faculties; but if he has too low an opinion, it may greatly deteriorate their real force, because nothing is more true than that most people *possunt, quia posse videntur*—and that he who has not confidence, rarely succeeds even when he has the power. "While the notion of want of power," says Johnson, "has possession of the head, it produces the inability it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes."

The greater part of the books which are brought forth are little better than manufactures, or the pourings-out of memory. This sort of *crambe*,

recocta is very nauseous. He who has no mind of his own to look into, had better lay down his pen; and even if he has a mind of his own, it must be a mind of good quality,—rich and sound. By what processes the mental faculties arrive at that dominion over ideas by which rectitude of opinion and sentiments is acquired, no one can presume accurately to trace: these must be inborn gifts, but they must be cultivated with skill and industry.

It must be supposed that all minds have a wide field of ideal views before them, on which they are accustomed to gaze: how happens it that so few can embody them, and put them into shape and language? Do they behold them as congregated in masses of formless clouds? Can they neither seize nor discriminate any thing? Instead of reducing them into order, are they obliged to copy what others have already done? But perhaps there are those who have no ideal views, and who only see things in their material presence. But even animals have some imagination; otherwise how could they dream,—as a hound in his sleep dreams that he is in full chase?

We come into the world with a desire of knowledge, which grows in proportion as we cherish it. We are impatient to learn the nature and causes of things, as a child tears open his fiddle that he may find out whence the sound comes. And

what we are curious to know, we are generally desirous to tell: the impulse arises partly from a wish to gain notice, and partly from a social feeling.

Had not the art of writing been discovered, many would not have been aware of the powers of their own genius; because, for whatever cause, they could not have delivered themselves clearly in conversation. The self-possession of the closet, and the time given to think, enable an author to digest his thoughts and arrange his language in a way he could not have done orally.

It is pleasant to think that what one has fixed by the pen and paper will remain, when one is silent in the grave, in as full force as when it was written. Horace says, *Non omnis moriar*;—but may any puny author like me presume to say so?

CHAPTER IX.

Death of the Duke of Sutherland—Rapid succession of mortality among the Egerton blood—Author accused of aristocratical pride—Female descent—Gower family—Old baronial families—Power of wealth—Aboriginal nobility—"Stemmata Illustria"—Contents of first volume of "Dugdale's Baronage"—Feelings of *parvenus*—Glory of descent from genius or heroism—Personal pretensions—Literary amateurs—Can we judge ourselves—Imagination—Classes of imagination—Minds come from another world—Ideal models—Charms of Autumn—Citation from Wrangham's Horace—How far low spirits affect imagination—Fictions of artificial life—Tainted air of cities—Visionary faculty—Power of embodying it rare—Sameness in literature—Fear often restrains the expression of original thought—What hidden inscriptions the poet brings out—Instruction of genuine poetry—Poetry fostered one day; neglected another—Insensibility to the invisible world—Descriptions of pure material images—Utility—Cocker's "Arithmetic"—Author's principles of poetry not partial or narrow—These canons require rare endowments—These canons not trite, nor generally acknowledged—Poetical criticisms of "Edinburgh Review"—If the author's canons are wrong, they may be refuted—Italian school of poetry superior to the French—Johnson's test as to Pope—Little poetical invention in the great body of English poetry—Want of genius endeavoured to be supplied by what is strained and extravagant—Technical critics love technical compositions.

On this day, 30th July, 1833, I have received intelligence at Geneva that the Duke of Sutherland died at the ancient castle of his Duchess in the northern part of Scotland about ten days ago,

aged seventy-five years and a half. He was the head of my mother's family by his mother, who was sister to the last Duke of Bridgewater. Not only are all the male Egertons of the Bridgewater branch now, as it seems, extinct, but those who are half Egertons by the mother* are reduced to seven or eight. I am one of these very few, whose own mother was an Egerton.† The lustre of the Bridgewater family cannot be doubted by any one who is an English genealogist. I need not repeat what is to be found in the Peerages. I did not know the Duke of Sutherland; but all are aware that he was enormously rich; and in early life it was said that he gave the promise of talent,—which is surely a much better possession than riches. He was reported to be reserved and haughty.

I am accused of an insane degree of genealogical pride. I care nothing for collaterals: I have no reason to care for them. I have never courted them, and they have never paid any attention to me. If there be any thing in blood, it as much belongs to one as to the other. All that strikes me is this,—that a distinguished female descent will not do, unless there is an honourable male stock to graft it upon.

These are always doubtful ingredients, which,

* Earl Granville, half-brother of the late Duke of Sutherland, was by a second wife.

† Mr. Egerton of Tatton is only an Egerton by his grandmother.

if they do not turn to good, turn to ill; such are the streams of high blood. Sometimes the consciousness of lofty descent leads in mean minds to impertinence and insolence: there is a sort of mixture of affected graciousness and arrogant taunt which is utterly insufferable.

The family of Gower is of considerable antiquity in Yorkshire, as gentry:—but their peerage is scarcely more than one hundred and thirty years old. They have enriched themselves by marriages,—which began with the Levesons. Since their peerage, they have always taken an active part about the court and in politics. They were one of the first houses whom Mr. Pitt promoted in the ranks of the peerage, by adding a marquisate to their earldom.

The old baronial families have been so intermixed with those of more recent date, that the public does not know them; and they scarcely recognise their own dignity. A jobbing ministry will always regard wealth and present power rather than birth and historical lustre. To base minds birth is nothing unless it be set off by riches and sounding titles.

To me, I confess, there seems a want of genuine splendor, unless there be what I call aboriginal nobility. By this I mean that very ancient nobility which has an historical appearance of being derived from Charlemagne. This seems to have been the case with almost all

the first Anglo-Norman earls and chief baronial houses. I have endeavoured to show this somewhat fully in my "Stemmata Illustria." There I have given nearly three hundred tables of descents, through different great families, from Charlemagne.

The first volume of "Dugdale's Baronage" contains all the Anglo-Norman peerage to the death of King Henry III. I can trace a descent from at least four-fifths of the whole of this number, and am entitled to quarter the arms of almost all the principal of them. Persons may, and will, dispute that there is any thing in noble and splendid descent: but if there is any thing in it, they cannot deny that it lies in such a lineage. As to the rest, there may be descent from most of them also; but as they are the names of those who lasted but a little while, and of whom scarce any thing is known that is important, I have no certain means of tracing their posterity. Of the rest, I cannot bring my mind to say with Ovid, *Vix ea nostra voco!*

The French call me "*fou d'aristocratie!*" Let revilers make what they will of my confessions. The *parvenus* say that all centres in self: they care nothing for ancestors. Then what is history? Had they not better burn all the annals of the past? Is it nothing to be the descendant of geniuses, statesmen, legislators, and heroes? If one

could trace from Spenser, or Shakspeare, or Milton, would that be nothing? Would it be nothing to be the son of Nelson, or Burke, or Fox, or Pitt? The greatest man in European history is Charlemagne: and from him my blood flows through three hundred channels.

Have I derived any of my own enthusiasm from these ancestors? Or is it an accidental state of blood which has begun and will end with me? Of all things, I protest against being considered as a mere literary *amateur*, whose claims depend on his casual application to books and composition. If nature has done nothing for me, let me give up intellectual labours. But it will again be asked, Can any one appreciate his own mental qualities? I have myself a very clear opinion that he can. Every one knows when he performs his task easily, and when he is obliged to struggle. Nor can he fail to distinguish between memory and original thought. But then if it be original, can he appreciate its truth or force? It appears to me that no one can mistake weakness for force: he may be more likely to mistake error for truth.

There is a faculty of the mind, about which I cannot suppose that any one can delude himself for a moment: this is imagination. If he cannot see real objects, he is blind, and knows that he is blind:—if he cannot see ideal objects, he has

no imagination; and must know that he has no imagination. He can also distinguish between what is reflected by the mirror of his fancy, and what is produced by his own creation.

The imagination which employs itself in petty decorations, which adds flowers and colours only, is of little value. It must deal in day-dreams, and visions as bright as the heavens. This is the charm of life: man thus clothes himself with wings, and rises into a higher order of existence. Realities, which the sober eye of reason dissects, are but dull things.

We bring a mind with us from another world, and we shall carry it back to another world; so that we are conversant with other objects than this globe exhibits. But why do we let them pass away without painting them? Is it true philosophy to suppress and destroy these delusions? We are always nursing in our brain some ideal person as a model to us; and we see him on the mountains, on the lakes, and in the valleys! When we are mournful, he comforts us;—when we are alone, he talks to us;—when we are insulted, he soothes and encourages us; thus we raise worlds over which we have dominion, and breathe ethereal air!

I love the month of August: it is the commencement of the fading year. I have always found a pleasing melancholy in the fall of the leaves, from my early childhood, when I collected them

into heaps, and made bowers and huts of them. Thomson has described this melancholy admirably. But why should we like the year's decline? Does not old age come upon us too fast? And why should we like storms and cold better than sunshine and genial warmth? A contemplative mind loves the fireside; and the darkness of winter is a veil which nurses thought.

This puts me in mind of one of my favorite odes of Horace,—the 9th of the 1st book—"*Vides ut altâ,*" and my friend Archdeacon Wrangham's translation:

> "Seest thou, dear friend, how white with snow
> Towers in mid air Soracte's brow;
> How with their load the forests bend,
> And frost the torrent's force has chain'd?
> The season's chilling cold to chase,
> Bid on thy hearth huge fagots blaze;
> And from the twin-ear'd pitcher pour
> Thine inmost bin's time-mellow'd store;
> Leave to the gods all cares beside!"—
> &c. &c.

Bloomfield's mother said that three fiends haunted her,—Winter, Poverty, and Old Age. She must have had a comfortless mind so to view them.

In some sorts of gloom the imagination plays: but there is a lowness of spirits which crushes it. I have sometimes experienced this; and then every object loses its tints, and a brown horror overlays all the scenery of earth. It is reality in its most barren and offensive forms.

I hate those fictions which represent society

in its worst and meanest artificialities,—those petty passions of accidental and temporary life and manners,—those odious fashions of folly and vanity, on which feeble intellects and debased hearts pride themselves. These do not deserve the name of fiction in its favourable sense. Many of them are mere copies of individuals, and actual events, drawn with a coarse exaggeration. Their moral tendency is bad, because they enforce trifles, and those prejudiced views of things, of which it is the first duty of the mind to get rid. The imagination of genius always looks to exalt, or soften and spiritualize. It always wanders away from daily life and the mean struggles of society. It sits alone upon the rock, and meditates upon the murmurs and the rolling of the ocean.

It is frightful to live among the tainted air, smoke, noise, squalidness, and bad passions of great cities. There the senses must grow callous, and the heart must harden. The elasticity of the vital breath must become languid and dull. There imagination dies, and human nature becomes imbruted. There is no hope, because all is palpable and undisguised wretchedness. But in the free air, by the woods and the streams, perhaps the coldest mind may be awakened; because the fibres of the brain are kept in health and tremulous emotion.

I suspect that this visionary faculty is not un-

common; but that the possessors cannot embody their visions for want of practice and exertion. We have not in literature many fictions of this kind carried to a great extent. It is a wide and eloquent field for labour, which would bring great delight and exaltation. We often see shapes sitting in clouds of a celestial beauty, or sublimity; or skimming over the waves, or lifted on pinions above our heads. But we let them pass, to describe vulgar earthly objects. We follow the tracks of others, and continue to neglect, because our predecessors have neglected. Thus there is a fatiguing sameness in literature; and we go on in the same beaten paths till all energy dies.

It is not improbable that many authors who have ideas of their own, do not venture to express them, but through mere timidity repeat what their memory supplies: this is a miserable sort of cowardice. Johnson, in his "Life of Thomson," speaks of the poet's eye, which sees and selects what is most beautiful in the forms of nature: but this is not a poet's first business; it is to associate with those material forms spiritual ideas and sentiments. These sleep in the brains or hearts of many readers till awakened by the poet's touch:—here lies the poet's spell. And if he does not do this, he fails in the chief aim he ought to have. If he only tells that with which every one is already familiar, what good does he do? The poet brings out the hidden and

mysterious inscriptions in the clouds, in the air, and on the surface of the earth. He is not the inventor of whimsical fantasticalities, but the oracle of truth. It is the abuse of poetry, and the false productions which take its name, that bring it into contempt, as an idle and childish art.

Whenever poetry takes a right course, it conveys instruction more important than any other branch of human literature. For what knowledge is so important as that which lets us into the secret movements of the heart and head, and which teaches us how to think and feel? If we resolve to be dull, and to glory in our dulness, let us throw aside the poet's lessons. He will not teach us how to get money, or how to play the crafty man's part in the world: nor will he teach us to excel in any thing manual or practical. But as it is by mind that man lives in this globe superior to all other created beings, he will display to us—what is consequently most necessary—all the field of mind.

Poetry is the rage of one day—the glut and neglect of another. This is because the multitude will always be capricious and changeable: and at one time they will not hear an angel's voice, while at another they will listen delighted to the rhymes of a bellman. The proof that a genuine poet ought to be read with interest, is no proof that he will be so. Some are unwilling

to have their better ideas and affections stirred, because they suppose it would unfit them to bustle with the world; and it is true that it has a tendency to make them too susceptible for rough society. I do not think that the temperament of poetry is fit for those who are condemned to the hard and cunning offices of life.

But to live in a world partly inhabited by spirits, and to be utterly unconscious of them, is brutality. If Providence has not given the faculties to apprehend what is invisible, the defect must be endured: but voluntarily to abandon what may thus be perceived, is crime. He who does not know what is taught by the best poets, —and by them only,—is of an inferior order of beings! And he is so, whether his ignorance is by his own default, or by the denial of nature. When listening to the solemn moanings of the wind in the middle of the night, when all else is silent, the poetic mind hears the mighty converse of spirits among the trembling foliage. Nothing is so sublime and affecting as the hollow swell of the gusts; and then its dying falls!

It is but a low strain to describe what all can outwardly see, and repeat what beings of mere materiality say. Descriptions, therefore, of actual manners and observations upon common life belong to a mean class of poetry. I am aware that this is the reverse of the general opinion. It re-

quires so much less fineness of intellect in the reader to relish such descriptions and observations, than the airy movements of mind! What is visible to the naked eye can be commented upon by all mankind; and their actual and practical habits and conduct can escape no one's notice. It is well to have a rectitude of opinion upon these things; but they may be taught by meaner preceptors.

Vulgar arguers will insist on utility; but the baker and the shoemaker are more useful in the ordinary sense, than the most splendid genius. Usefulness must be estimated by its dignity and refinement. By ordinary measure, a horse or cow may be more useful than an intelléctual being, and a pig perhaps more useful still. The multiplication-table is thus more useful than the greatest discoveries of Newton. Johnson thought so, I presume;—when on his tour, the book which he carried in his pocket was "Cocker's Arithmetic."

It will be said that I have laboured to establish my own ideas of poetry, that I might adapt them to what I have conceived to have been my own practice; this will not be a just censure. I have put forth a standard much too high for myself; and I have put it without reference to self. I deny that my notions of poetry are narrow: and I am the more convinced they are right, because they agree not only with all an-

cient canons from Aristotle downwards, but with the actual merits of all who from the beginning of time have uniformly been conceded the reputation of the greatest poets. Those notions are narrow which are confined to particular models, artificial rules, and temporary favourites.

If my principles on this subject are correct, it will follow that none but a mind of rare endowments ought to attempt poetry. The intellect must be lofty, strong, and subtle; the heart must be tremulous, fiery, and tender; the fancy must be brilliant; above all, the imagination must be visionary, spiritual, inventive, sagacious, sound, and correct. And after this, we may address to the aspirant the words of Collins in his "Ode on the Poetical Character."

Then will come the objection, that I am tediously dwelling on points already settled for ages. It is true that they have been long settled by the best authorities; but in many instances of later years they have so far been brought back into doubt, that there is no subject on which the public has at this day less consistent opinions. There are numerous beautiful criticisms on poetry in the "Edinburgh Review;" but they are in no degree consistent with each other. Every article must be considered by itself; for, taken together, they are continually contradictory; principles are laid down in each, adapted for or against the particular work chosen to be criticized. At one

time the flowers of poetry are commended; at another its stern and naked sublimity:—here, overwhelming force; there, melting tenderness.

Let it be shown, if my opinions are wrong, where they are so! I have given my reasons, and I believe that my *dicta* have never been vague and fantastic. I have certainly placed the Italian school of poetry above the French; but the very name of the word Poetry determines this question, unless it can be shown that poetry does not mean creation or imaginative invention. And thus the question about Pope is decided by a simple word.

Johnson asks in his arrogant way, "If Pope is not a poet, who is?" This is easily answered. Fifty might be named at once without difficulty, beginning with Homer and Virgil, and going to Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, &c. Some suppose the book of Job to be a poetical invention: it has many of its noblest qualities.

In the vast and fatiguing mass of English verses, I assert that there is very little poetical invention; and that there is a resort to diction—sometimes happy, often crude—to cover the defect. The consequence is, that there is a want of life, force, and probability, in most of these compositions. They are put together without inspiration, or enthusiasm, by mere toil and art. In proportion as there is a want of genius, there

is always an attempt at something far-fetched and striking. They who are carried on by the presence and activity of an ideal object cannot wait to work up the prettinesses and false glitter of an artificial style. And when it is done, the fashion of this artificial style is always changing: one age always admires something varying from another: and what it rejects, it is disgusted with; so that from a beauty it becomes a deformity.

They who have no taste always require false stimulants; stimulants which operate less upon the intellect and the interior of the bosom, than upon the external faculties. What is executed by technical art and toil can be apprehended by technical art and toil. To the delicate and magical touches of genius, art and toil are insensible.

CHAPTER X.

Different tastes as to the proper matter of biography—Facts or opinions—These last associated with an individual life—Boasters—Interest in frank confessions — Effect of autobiographies — Truth and its application to individuals are separate questions—Happiness of rightly fixing one's own position—Psychology—Few books teach any thing new—Authors must seek truth, and calmly abide the result—Benefit of dispersing the mists of mind—Candidates for fame must not choose their own place—Memorialists may bring their claims into notice—Intellect not given for self—Edinburgh Review on Moore's " Life of Sheridan"—Imagination too short in its flight—Beattie—Persons will not be convinced against their will —Our evil passions destroy our happiness—Fame flies in proportion as it is pursued—Why be unhappy at the want of genius?—All unreasonable passions afflict us—Gold is the only idol of the world—Love of fame cannot be eradicated——Temporary fame often not to be accounted for—A mechanical author dangerous to society—Definition of the best poetry—Spangles of style reproved—Native preeminence of intellect often denied—Technical critics interested in this—Authors must give something new—Mortification of inability —Author's regret at not having always written boldly and without check—His inborn timidity—Charge of querulousness—His doubt how this memoir will be received—Delicacy in speaking of living contemporaries—Danger of indiscriminately registering conversations—Statesmen of great genius — Power of drawing character — Clarendon and Saint Simon—Gossip—Sir Nathaniel Wraxall—Opinions of an aged letter-writer worth something—Age hardens native barrenness—Reflections do not outlast the moment except in minds of imagination—Essences of thought.

I AM aware that there is great difference of taste among readers as to the sort of matter which is most interesting in autobiography. The greater

part like facts; the better part like opinions, reflections, and sentiments. The reason is, that facts are more easily understood than what is intellectual. But the chances are, that he who has had an eventful life has little to say which is instructive to others. Facts are striking in proportion as they are singular, and therefore do not apply to others.

Some may remark on this that then essays would be better than biography, and that it would be preferable to have the whole matter general at once. But when associated with an individual life they have something of a personified animation, and the force of individual feeling and experience. We want to know of an author, who has written on subjects extraneous to himself, what are his own private convictions and sentiments. I believe that this curiosity is very generally prevalent.

I have always been in the habit of registering in language, and often in poetry, the impressions and humours of the moment. It eases my bosom of a load. These are scattered about in numerous irregular volumes, or lost in the chaos of my papers; and I often totally forget them, till by some accident they fall in my way.

I suspect that a boaster is universally hated or despised; but he who lets out his weaknesses and throws himself upon our mercy, often engages our interest and affection. What is written

superficially or disguisedly is always detected and estimated at its due worthlessness. What is written profoundly and truly is sure to prevail at last. There are thousands unknown to the world who yet seek for truth and have a sagacious judgment.

What has been the effect as to those who have given memoirs of themselves? They have certainly enabled the public to judge of them more accurately, whether for good or for bad, than if they had not executed this task. There is nothing more useful than a precise discrimination of the mental and moral qualities of mankind, and their gradations in the scales of virtue and dignity. These distinctions may be made by understandings of deep investigation with an accuracy which cannot be resisted or called into question. Perhaps a self-memorialist may be able to do it; but then may he not furnish principles, rules, and authorities for his own condemnation? Yet if he fails to do it, and bends his arguments and conclusions plausibly to his own case, he does but expose himself to be refuted and cast down. He has therefore a responsibility upon him to speak the truth, if he can discover it.

What is the general truth, and how far it applies to self, are distinct questions, which should be kept entirely separate. When we have settled the first apart, it will be much less difficult to decide the other. But if we could rightly fix our

own position, and fix it high, should we be the happier for it? I believe that a clear and firm sense of our superiority does contribute to our happiness. To attain it is a desire implanted in us by Providence for good purposes. But then the *arbitrium popularis auræ* moves us like a weathercock if we regard it. We must look for some stay independent of it. To be at the mercy of capricious opinion is misery.

I labour therefore to estimate with rigid and stern inquiry what faculties of the mind ought most to prevail. Psychology is a difficult science, in which much yet remains to be done. But the classification of the understanding commonly received, by which its different powers are defined, must be admitted. Then, having a clear apprehension what they are, we can decide whether an individual is endowed with them; for instance, whether such individual has imagination? If two persons dispute this, the chances are that the dispute turns on the different meaning they affix to the word.

The greater part of books, whatever be the subject, teach nothing new, nor raise in the reader any new train of ideas. I should be inclined therefore to cast them by my *Index Expurgatorius* out of the library. A man when he has borrowed an incursion of ideas new to himself, is apt to think that he has made discoveries, and turns author. But an higher power than this is required. In

settling these points he may be amused or interested, but how is the public concerned in them? It is concerned, because it aids the developements of the history of mind. I consider what engages my attention in other memoirs, and I suppose that I may have the same good luck with other readers.

But no author can surely anticipate where he shall please or displease. He can do no more than seek for truth, without looking to the right or left. Folly, and flattery, and falsehood, will be discovered and laid bare, though they may gratify the momentary appetite of the multitude. He who pursues his mournful path undauntedly amid storms, and chills, and blights, will awaken some sympathy and some good wishes. Whatever disperses the mists of the mind gives some amusement and cheer of spirit. We can accompany a recluse sage in his fate, and in our imagination sit with him in his solitude, and partake his melancholy reflections, his complaints, and his regrets. We are soothed by finding that wisdom and talent are sometimes as weak and helpless as ourselves; and that the haughty frown of genius cannot throw off adversity, and insult, and neglect.

Half mankind are ashamed of their most innocent and virtuous enjoyments till they find that their superiors in endowment are bold to avow them. Thus we are delighted when we find

Cowper relating with *naïve* openness his occupations of making bird-cages and boxes for his tame hares. To me, for many years of my life, a new book by the fireside, shut out from the world, was intense joy and rapture. I know not why, but in these my latter days of decaying memory, books have lost much of their interest; I can occupy myself with more pleasure in writing than in reading.

No one will be allowed to choose his own place in the merit-roll of society: but he is entitled to put forth his claims if he puts them honestly. At first they may be little attended to; but they will, if just, have their weight at last. If it be complained that they are mere *dicta* unaccompanied by proof, it may be answered that, in many respects, such assertions bear internal evidence of their own truth or falsehood. A memorialist is thus justified in bringing into notice many considerations which might otherwise escape a censor. Keeping in full view what are the distinct gifts of mind, a censor can scarcely fail to be able to appreciate accurately the claims set up.

The intellectual powers of man are not given merely for self: they are not intended to aid his own cunning, and craft, and intrigues, and conspiracies, and enrichment. They will do nothing for these base purposes. The instinct of a tiger, a vulture, or a fox, will do better. Genius and abilities are given as lamps to the world, not to

self. I cannot contain my indignation at those vile wretches who contend that a man cannot have sound abilities if they have not taught him to play the part of his own personal interests well.

There is a curious article in the Edinburgh Review on Moore's "Life of Sheridan," written with much thought, but with which I cannot entirely concur. I would cite a few of the passages, but that I do not choose these Memorials should be filled with citations. It is sufficiently apparent, by the extracts from "Sheridan's Fragments," that his earliest ambition and labour was to be a wit; that is, to find out unexpected similitudes and illustrations. I repeat that I consider this a very secondary sort of genius. The great proof of inventive genius is a sustained imagination.

The wings of a true imagination are too often apt to flag for want of enduring strength. Beattie was an instance of this. He conceived a perfect idea of a poetical genius in his childhood; but he could not carry on his beautiful fiction: so that we must consider not only the possession of the higher faculties of the mind, but the degree in which they are imparted.

But we cannot reason others into any opinions we wish to establish:

> He that's convinced against his will,
> *Is of the same opinion still.*

We must leave others to think and feel in their

own way. Opinions are taken up from some whim, or secret prejudice, with which reason has nothing to do. The utmost one can hope to do is, to convince himself honestly and conscientiously: then he may gain that self-complacence, without which there can be no enjoyment or comfort. To have no anchor, nor ground to cast it on, but to be always beating about at the mercy of the waves of popular breath, is ceaseless uneasiness and misery. He who shows himself unsteady, invites attack.

Our evil passions render life restless, feverish, and full of disquietudes; when, if we controul them, happiness is in our power. The first thing is not to be touched by neglect or the false scoffs of the great ones of the world: the next thing is to endeavour to deserve fame; but not to be anxious about acquiring it. It will fly us in proportion as we are eager in its pursuit. It is a shadow that vanishes in the grasp. All the noise which the world makes about a name is a mere contest between puffing and decrying. These are the battledores that keep the shuttlecock in the air.

After all, why should a man be unhappy if nature has refused him genius or great abilities? If that is a good cause of unhappiness, all mankind, except a very few, must be unhappy. But it will be said, that it is the ambition of these gifts, without the power, that makes the unhappiness.

So will every unreasonable passion. But then again, if there be the power, there will be the desire; and yet the power will not command the possession: because fame is notoriously bestowed by caprice or intrigue, and not by merit. The only power to which the world bows,—the only god universally worshipped, is gold. He who loves idolatry or flattery must be rich, and then he will be gratified.

But, alas, whatever abstract wisdom teaches us, the fire of hope, and love of fame, which nature has implanted in our bosoms, cannot be quelled. We pine after it in defiance of all our reasonings. It is a spirit that haunts us, and flits about us incessantly, threaten it as we may. We cannot argue away nature: we are more creatures of passion than of reason.

They who have arrived at celebrity by management and charlatanism can never be at rest; and such are the major part of those who acquire public notice. There must be the addition of some piece of luck to bring the greatest genius into notice. The public never judge for themselves, nor read according to individual taste. Some master-spirit, or some accident, gives the word of command. Popular opinion therefore is nothing more than an echo.

We sometimes observe writings have a temporary sway, which, when the fashion is past, we cannot account for. But this may not unfre-

quently arise from something in the personal character of the author,—some influence he possesses independent of his literary talents; and this often of a political nature. I do not believe that a good author has ever been made by accident. He must have peculiar inborn faculties and gifts; and these will almost always find a vent. What author ever began to be an author late in life? It is not difficult to find matter for the press — such as will satisfy a common reader; but very difficult to find what is essentially and properly good. It must be good in matter, not in style,—which is a minor, and not indispensable, accompaniment. I would prohibit all mocking-birds who have no notes of their own, and then the press would be discharged of nineteen-twentieths of its burdens, and the reader's time and pocket proportionally released. Mere originality, which only differs by error, is indeed mischievous.

A mechanical author, whose whole purpose is to cook up literary dishes highly seasoned, to pamper the popular appetite, is one for whom nature has done nothing good, and who is a dangerous member of society. The minds of the multitude are apt enough to go wrong without being excited onward in their course. Were only good books published, the state of public opinion would be much less unhealthy. But there are no means of repressing the licentiousness of the press without endangering its just liberty. As to deciding merit

in the higher branches of literature, especially poetry, and all that is allied to it, I cannot see where there can be difficulty or doubt. Wherever there is a question, it is only raised by false canons of criticism; and those can be blown up the moment a strong and bold hand touches them.

He who has the brightest imagination of verisimilitudes, which are lofty, tender, beautiful, and important, is the greatest poet; but, as to spangles of style, or fantasticalities of thought, they imply a littleness which is inconsistent with positive genius. What embodies an abstract falsehood is not genuine poetry. The understanding must be satisfied as well as the fancy delighted. I am aware that there is much of modern metrical compositions enjoying popularity which will not stand these tests.

There is nothing so much the practice of the detractors from mental superiority as to deny all native pre-eminence of intellect, and to endeavour to depress those who are so gifted. They therefore always seize upon what is artificial as the subject of praise, and wish to throw a shade over what ought to be the distinction of that which is good. Those technical beauties, which are the result of toil and trick, are brought forward to notice and approbation. The republic of letters is conducted by as many artifices as the most corrupt political governments.

No one can hope to erect *monumentum ære perennius* who does not work independent of these intrigues, and reckless of them. The moment he pays attention to them his spirit and raciness are gone. Let him settle in his own mind what is good, and never swerve from it. If he follows idols or models, as they are successively set up, he will never know where he is. Interested or partial critics cannot hurt him if he shows a bold face, and is just and forcible in what he writes; and if he is not fit for his occupation, the sooner he knows it the better. That he who wants imagination should attempt metrical compositions, is as bad as for one to take the office of chancellor of the exchequer without understanding arithmetic.

We demand from a new book something to be found no where else, and something worth knowing. If the author cannot do this, it were better to throw down his pen. Where there is inability, the pursuit is nothing but a succession of mortifications; but, in the verdict pronounced upon him, do not let him be deterred by the anathema of false judges.

There is nothing I regret more than not to have written boldly and without check, through my long literary life of fifty years. But, unfortunately, I was of a morbid, timid, anxious, diffident temperament. Some will smile at these epithets, but they are most strictly true. They will say

how is this consistent with the feelings of one who has ventured on the perilous task of autobiography? But I have been irritated into this fearful work. And how? Because through life I have met with little but injustice. And this assertion, like all the rest, will be met by a charge of querulousness. I know how the world is won. By smiling, and boasting, and jesting outwardly at the rod that gives inward torture! It is a relief to me to speak of things as they are; and to let my enemies confute me if they can.

I am not at all sure how this self-memorial will be received. I suspect it will be said that there is too much of opinion and sentiment, and too little of eventful narrative in it. But if the reader wants busy facts and surprising adventures, let him go to the stories of soldiers and sailors, of voyages of discovery, of shipwrecks, and mutinies, and savage islands; or of men who, like Boswell, have a restless ambition to be personally acquainted with every literary magnate into whose company they can force themselves; whose conversations they have recorded, and whose characters they have embellished. I am a shy, reserved man, who never solicit any one's acquaintance; who am neither a sayer nor a repeater of *bons mots;* who am fitful and often embarrassed in conversation; who am sometimes too impetuous, and sometimes too fearful, and whose activity has been little other than activity of the

mind. I have seen a few eminent men in the course of my long existence; but of my living contemporaries I am restrained by delicacy to speak much, if at all. Of many of the dead I have, for various reasons, said less than I might have said. I think nothing more useful than to draw characters, if a strict regard be paid to truth and justice.

As to the register of conversations, it is often amusing, and sometimes instructive,—but very dangerous. In the impulse of the moment people inconsiderately say much for which they are very sorry, and which is not their sober opinion; and bitter censures of others are thus perpetuated which the censurer does not retain in his own heart longer than the words take in the delivery. Among much which is excellent that Boswell has recorded of Johnson, there is much also of this kind which ought to have been expunged. It is the same of others, especially of Lord Byron. All frank talkers necessarily say much which ought to be forgotten. They who are so cautious as to say nothing objectionable, seldom say any thing good.

As to what those might have the opportunity of telling who have been in high office, it rarely happens that they tell much. Perhaps they have been too busy distinctly to observe and remember, or perpetual change has so worn out distinctions with them that they lose all tact. Indeed, leading statesmen have not been of the

highest order of intellect, except such men as Bacon, Raleigh, Buckhurst, Clarendon, Chatham, and Burke.

The authors who draw characters best are those possessed of most imagination, corrected by reason and some moderate experience. There is not enough of sensibility in statesmen: they grow hard by over-intercourse with the cunning and heartless practitioners of worldly adroitness. I do not know enough of Sir Robert Peel to know if he could draw characters. I doubt it. I am sure Pitt could not. In this no one ever equalled Clarendon, except Saint Simon, who exceeded him, because he entered more deeply into internal movements. I am speaking of statesmen, not poets.

They who tell gossip please for the moment, but its inaccuracy is soon detected. Who now regards any of the long mass of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's Memoirs? They who repeat things as they appear upon the surface, give encouragement to false and ignorant views. Such things may be endured for the moment in mixed and thoughtless society, but they are not to be perpetuated by the press. It is said, if the people will pay for them, let them have them. This is selling oneself to corruption.

It will scarcely be contended that the deliberate opinions of an old man, addicted to literature and meditation from his childhood, and who has not

passed his life in one spot, and among one set of people, are worth nothing. I must re-assert that opinions are of much more value than facts. No man's mind exerts itself duly till he is at his ease; and therefore no one writes well till he has been long practised in it. So no man's observations can be sober and sound till age has mellowed his views.

It is true that where there is a natural want of fertility, age does but increase the barrenness of the soil; and if it gives any substitute for dulness, it is nothing but wicked cunning. But fertility augments in proportion as it is cultured and fed; and rich opinions are made up of so many ingredients, that when they concur, they become of precious value. Faculties naturally apprehensive and sensitive, with great activity and vigour of combination, kept alive by varieties of agitating events, can scarcely fail to produce lessons of forcible and eloquent reflection.

In the moments which closely follow pressing realities, reflections may be abundant and strong in common minds, but they perish with the occasion, and are forgotten as if they had never been. They remain with glowing and revivifying colours only in imaginative brains. They can be scarcely said to be intellectual when they do not spring out of ideal circumstances; and, so far as they are material, they are incommunicable. We have the essences of certain liquids, or certain vegetables,

and other substances; we may have the essences of thoughts also. Are these to be rejected because the material ingredients are thrown away?

As long as we can encourage meditation and idealism we ought to do so. But few people can live long in the atmosphere of pure thought. It requires the inborn quality of high faculties, strengthened and spiritualized by long years of attentive and skilful culture. We shall find it perceivable by a keen observance from an early period of childhood; and its susceptibility will make it like a tender plant that cannot exist in common air.

CHAPTER XI.

The author's intercourse with foreign manners and scenes—His latter recluseness—His habits of literary toil—His eyesight—His walks—The Lake—His alienation from England—His reproaches of it—Its extortions proved by the Thellusson case—His return to England in 1826—Great changes since he left it in 1818—His loss of spirits—East Kent society—Gleig—Introduction to Lockhart—Dr. Farmer, Dean Horne, and Mr. Todd—Mr. Simons, Rector of Eckham—Cabals against literature—Paris society—Washington Irving, Chenevix, Underwood, Sir James Lawrence, Madame Beloe, Julien, Van Praet, Medwin, Mathias at Naples—Countess Guiccioli—Mr. Richard Burgess and Mr. Hartley—Genevan Government—Genevan climate—Mountain and lake scenery—Narrow society and local prejudices—Assumption of a poetical mind—Great poets lead congenial lives—Poets not men of the world—Should pass their days chiefly in solitude—Manners of different nations—Occasional light gained by collision of conversation—Author's aversion to company from childhood—Poetical minds too susceptible for coarse society—Mean censurers think this to be an insurmountable objection to poetical genius.

I HAVE touched upon my latter days, and I have passed through a wilderness of thought. The reader may want to know a little more of my intercourse with foreign manners and habits. But of late I have been an almost entire recluse: I am calmest and happiest in solitude; I can command my own hours, and can sleep in the day, and toil by the lamp at night. The day I write

this I have worked for seventeen hours uninterruptedly; and, having begun at sunrise, may probably prolong my vigils till midnight, of which there wants little more than two hours. My eyes, on the verge of seventy-one, are good, and I have never used spectacles. This day I have not quitted my bed. Usually I take a walk of six miles in the morning amid this magnificent scenery. The gales of the Lake blow freshness upon me and brace me.

I care not for England, except that I regret the distance from its literature of the day. I owe nothing to England, except that its agents have enormously robbed me, and its friends have been fickle and heartless. I hope the law may be now reformed—never did any country so much want it. Only look for conviction at the Thellusson case. But I could bring instances even of treble the atrocity of the Thellusson. How the changes now enacted may work I am afraid to indulge too much hope. The law is the locust that literally eats up the land. Excess of taxation is bad enough; but taxation is nothing to it.

When I went back to England in June, 1826, I found the condition of the agricultural population deteriorated far beyond any thing that the most gloomy writers had represented, and all the links and habits of society proportionally broken and degraded. The high had become low, and the low had become high. Death had been busy with

the generation of my own time, and even with that much junior to me. I soon so entirely lost my spirits that I could not persuade myself to emerge into the society of London, where I might have found some congeniality and satisfaction. There is no literature in East Kent; but I found a stranger lately settled there, Mr. Gleig, a valuable neighbour, and a talented man. I saw no society but at his house. I scarcely recollect a literary man furnished by Canterbury Cathedral, which ought to be the *depôt* of learning. All whom I recollect in sixty years are Dr. Farmer, Dean Horne, and Mr. Todd, whose superiority was so unpleasant to them, that they gave him preferment to remove him. As many of them have been noblemen's tutors, it is strange they should have so little regard to literature. My friend Pennington, being removed twelve miles from me when I was too feeble to quit home, I saw but little of. But we had a most hospitable, gentlemanlike, and high-spirited neighbour in our rector Mr. Simons, whose son is well known for his "Chancery Reports;" and I cannot speak too highly of General Miller, so well known for the active share he took with the liberating party in South America. At Gleig's I first met Mr. Lockhart, whose valuable friendship has contributed so largely to my intellectual happiness.

There is no medium in the neglecters of literature: they are not content to neglect—they hate

with a deadly animosity. They form cabals and intrigues, and use every trick of detraction. But, the subject is not worth dwelling upon, and I dismiss it.

Abroad I have met with many men of literature and celebrity. At Paris I had the happiness to know Washington Irving, whom I found as amiable as he is eminent; and Mr. Chenevix, since dead; and Mr. Underwood, author of the "Curious Diary of a Détenu," published in the "London Magazine;" Sir James Lawrence, Madame Beloe, and Mons. Julien, and Mons. Van Praet, &c. In1824 I met Captain Medwin at Geneva, who gave me some curious accounts of Lord Byron. At Naples, in 1820, I saw Mathias, to whom I had been introduced some years before, when on a visit to my brother at Wootton; but we did not recognise each other. I am always reluctant to make the first address to any one. In autumn, 1831, Madame Sismondi introduced me to the Countess Guiccioli. In the same autumn Dr. Lardner dined with me at Geneva; and on another day Mr. Charles Sheridan. I have also found agreeable acquaintance in the ministers of the English chapel here. Mr. Richard Burgess, author of the "Antiquities of Rome," and Mr. Hartley, who has published a learned and beautiful account of his mission in Greece. Chateaubriand has been here; but I have not had a personal view of him. Some years ago I dined with

Capo d'Istria at Sir Francis d'Ivernois' Campagne. I think it was in 1823 or 1824. He was a very handsome man, a great linguist, and who spoke beautiful French; but a deep and wily diplomatist and intriguant. As to mere men of rank, not personally distinguished, I do not think it worth while to mention—but the Duke of San Carlos, whom I saw sometimes both at Geneva and Paris, was a historic character, and had most courteous and delightful manners.

I believe that the constitution of the Genevan government is well fitted for so small a territory; the laws are simple, and on the whole well administered. There will always be individual exceptions, where there cannot be formalities of office to cause such protections as in larger countries. But I have seen noble examples of kindness and courteous interference.

As to the climate of Geneva, it agrees with my constitution far better than England; nor do I find the winters more severe. Though fuel is dearer, the wood-fires are much more pleasant than coal.

To live among snow-clad, sky-touching mountains, and broad blue mighty lakes, does not with me lose its stirring effect by its familiarity. Grandeur of scenery gives enduring impulses to the mind. But there are wanting some features of landscape and nature which England exhibits—large old forest-like parks, and meadows and

plains cropped by immense herds and flocks: and however fine a lake is, it is not like the ocean. With regard to the peasantry, they live harder than in England; but I do not think that there is so much absolute poverty.

The effect of narrow society and local prejudices is always bad. I never met with one who had not strayed beyond them in possession of an enlarged mind and enlarged feelings. But in self-memorials my business is with my own mind and feelings. I take upon myself at some peril to assume that I have a poetical mind, which perhaps many may deny me; and that having written many metrical compositions, I am therefore a poet. It is thus part of my business to show that my private feelings and habits are consistent with the character I have put forth in my poems.

I have no reason to believe that any great poet ever led a life inconsistent with his poetry; and I assert that a great poet and a man of the world cannot unite in the same person. It is not necessary to give a definition of a man of the world, because the general opinion is sufficiently agreed upon that. I know that writers of verses have been often men of the world—but then those verses have not been of a high class of poetry.

I am of opinion that a great poet ought to pass much of his life in solitude, and that he ought never to debase himself by the society of mean minds. I think that he ought not to be bound

down by the little etiquettes of life, which are necessary for vulgar dispositions and endowments; and that he ought above all to avoid common rivalries and ambitions. His sensations should be kept pure, and his passions lofty. The surface of his manners will probably be conformable to the station of his birth and early familiarities; but that is of little importance. Genius is not limited to birth, or to the want of it. The manners of different stations will not bend to one another without servility on one side, and humiliating graciousness on the other. It is better for both that they should keep apart, except upon rare occasions.

Rank and wealth are bound to show patronage and attention to genius in an humble station—but they rarely do so. Genius therefore should assert its own dignity, and put them at defiance. The talents of some men lie in setting the table in a roar:—with them the table and a numerous acquaintance are the field of glory. If they have talents for the closet also, they must be very rare phenomenons.

I never saw a man more humble in manner, without losing his dignity, than Robert Bloomfield; but he was not easy in the company of men born and moving in a rank of society much above him; and I do not think he gained any thing by suffering himself to be drawn into it.

I will not say that I never gained any new lights by the collision of conversation; but what

little I have gained I have bought at a very high price or sacrifice—often of irritation, mortification, and regret. It requires calm self-possessed minds to enjoy conversation, and excel in it. That does not belong to me; and has rarely belonged to any of my cast.

I remember that from childhood I had an aversion to all company, and that visiters put me into agonies. My delight was in the fields and woods; in making bowers, and benches, and little gardens; and in watching the hay-makers, the harvest, the plough, and the woodman's axe. I grieved when evening came, and prayed for the dawn of the next day. My temper was always eager, impatient, and enthusiastic. School was perfect misery to me, and at first nearly overset my mind. I was not at all fitted for the rude companions of a public school. The nerves of those who are qualified for poetry are too tremulous for common intercourse.

These are not fantastic suppositions, as hard-heads will contend them to be. The internal colours of the mind must be vivid in proportion as the impressions are strong; and excess of inward sensibility must make coarse companions intolerable. Beattie's famous stanza descriptiveof young Edwin in his first years, beginning "And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy," must be true of almost every genuine poetical genius at the same age.

Many will pertly observe upon this, that if it be true, then genius is an evil and a curse. Whether it be so or not, we must take things as they are, and not as we think they ought to be. Struggle to write incompatibilities, and you lose all. Those feeble impulses which men of the world can disguise, will never make a poet. And if there be none, the crafty man will say, What loss will the world have? I will not contend with persons of this class about the usefulness or uselessness of poetry: it would be like breathing music to the rocks.

CHAPTER XII.

Recapitulation of families whence the author is descended—Justification of it — Pusillanimity of not asserting it — Pride in pedigree without knowledge reprobated —What makes pedigree a fair cause of pride — Obstinate scepticism — Impulses to autobiography — House of Yvery—Lord Egmont—Spencer Perceval—Names of the illustrious houses whose blood is in the author's veins—The present royal family—Author's descent from the union of the Tudor and Plantagenets—Author reproached for insisting on this—Mediocrists and parvenus — Male stock of existing peers—Self-reliance — The author crossed at every step — His great loss in the death of Lord Tenterden.

In the recapitulation of blood I am about to make, I am entirely sensible how unpalatable the topic will be to many. But one is not to indulge the poisoned and ill-passioned minds of those who choose to give way to their mean envy and jealousy. The mob will always cry—*Stemmata quid faciunt?* But there is such a thing as honour in birth, or there is not. If there is not, let us put down the aristocracy and have a perfect equality, if such a thing be possible, at once. By the mob I do not mean merely the low in station and wealth;—I mean also the low in heart, head, and disposition; those who, having risen from mean ancestry and mean callings into honours and

riches by corrupt channels, insult every one with their rank and place, and yet scoff at birth, and use every artifice to stifle the assertion of the pretensions of those who have it. They who, having it, suffer themselves to be thus pusillanimous as to be discouraged, deserve no pity if they are trod upon and crushed like worms. "Oh!" cry the scoffers, "but we trust to personal merits!" Why then do they seek and hold an hereditary rank? Their theory is, that merit does not descend: then, giving them credit for personal worth, why are their posterity to hold these privileges? If the high-born are such dotterels as to join this cry, it is from pure idiotism. But many such there are; and they ought to have forced upon them a yellow coat turned inside out, with a cap of bells and feathers. Many are content to enjoy honours and riches without inquiring how or why they have come into the possession of them. Many disguise the pride they feel in birth for fear of giving offence; yet secretly nurse in their own hearts the most absurd self-conceit on the subject.

A pride in pedigree, without knowing any thing of its history, is a blind and presumptuous pride. Mere antiquity will not make it illustrious: nor will an old male stock alone do without distinguished alliances; but there must be a good male stock to graft those alliances upon. A mongrel breed is apt to show its bad crosses. All pedigree

is read with suspicion where the quality is not such as to be demonstrated either by general or biographical history. There are certain ranks, offices, and personal characters, which speak for themselves. But mere dry genealogies of seven centuries—where to be born, marry, and die, are all that is known of the parties — teach nothing. But there are pedigrees of a quality of which the superiority is a matter of demonstration.

The noblest descent cannot exalt a fool or a rascal. But it may embellish a man of talent, genius, and virtue. I presume the blood, of which I am about to give a summary, will not be denied to be very noble and illustrious; nor can any one pretend to question my right to it. When detractors cannot deny, they evade:

> And when they cannot conquer, learn to fly!

No one can reason another into an admission of his own pretensions against his will, because, when pressed, he will turn a deaf ear. "Ah! very well," he will exclaim, "it may be so; but I do not understand those things."

Others will observe, "If you are aware of the inefficacy and vanity of these attempts, why are you labouring out your assertions and vindications?" Because when prejudices, and jealousies, and rivalries are dead, truth will prevail at last.

Almost every autobiography appears to have been stimulated by an impression on the part

of the writer that his character had been misrepresented or misunderstood. How many of these autobiographers have corrected important errors, which would otherwise have gone to posterity undoubted! As to blood, it is something in itself: but something also depends on its being known to others:

Nam quid scire valet, nisi quod tu scis, sciat alter.

Lord Egmont made himself ridiculous by his "History of the House of Yvery;" but then he dealt with a set of obscure Irish adventurers and robbers, even if it be conceded that they were as ancient as he makes them. He was one of the early examples of those who forced themselves from an Irish into an English peerage, which is now become so common and so mischievous. But he struggled long at that epoch before he could effect it, and yet he was a man of talent and literature. His youngest son rose by one of the most extraordinary accidents in our annals to be premier; and as all the world is too apt to judge by success, he was then given credit for talents of which he possessed a very small portion. His only pre-eminence lay in tartness and sarcasm, which was absurdly mistaken for acuteness. He was always ready to bark and snap: but he had the countenance, size, tone, and dissonance of a lap-dog. I remember him at Cambridge, and afterwards for many years

at the bar, without practice, or prospect of advancement:

> But there 's a tide in the affairs of men
> Which, taken at its height, leads on to fortune.

He came to a cruel end. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

And now I come to the summary of that of which my own blood is made up.

A SUMMARY OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSES FROM WHOM I AM BY FEMALE ALLIANCES DESCENDED.

1. Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater; 2. Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle; 3. Stanley, Earl of Derby; 4. Clifford, Earl of Cumberland; 5. Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; 6. Woodville, Earl Rivers; 7. Howard, Duke of Norfolk; 8. Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel; 9. Albini, Earl of Arundel; 10. Warren, Earl of Surry; 11. Lupus, Earl of Chester; 12. Algar, Earl of Mercia; 13. Bellomont, Earl of Leicester; 14. Neuburgh, Earl of Warwick; 15. Odo, Earl of Champagne; 16. Alan, Earl of Bretagne; 17. Montgomery, Earl of Arundel; 18. Montgomery, Earl of Lancaster; 19. St. Lez, Earl of Huntingdon; 20. Percy, Earl of Northumberland; 21. Bohun, Earl of Hereford. 22. Neville, Earl of Westmoreland; 23. Mortimer, Earl of March; 24. Clare, Earl of Gloucester; 25. Lacy, Earl of Lincoln; 26. Stafford, Earl of Stafford; 27. Courtenay, Earl of Devon; 28.

Montague, Earl of Salisbury; 29. D'Eurus, Earl of Salisbury; 30. Longspe, Earl of Salisbury; 31. Mandeville, Earl of Essex; 32. Gifford, Earl of Buckingham; 33. Comyn, Earl of Buchan; 34. Vere, Earl of Oxford; 35. Waithcof, Earl of Northumberland; 36. Robert, Earl of Monteigne and Cornwall; 37. Fitzosborne, Earl of Hereford; 38. Milo, Earl of Hereford; 39. Mowbray, Earl of Norfolk; 40. Bigod, Earl of Norfolk; 41. Gunder, Earl of Norfolk; 42. Montherman, Earl of Gloucester; 43. Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; 44. Redvers, Earl of Devon; 45. Ferrers, Earl of Derby; 46. De Spencer, Earl of Gloucester; 47. Manduit, Earl of Warwick; 48. Gant, Earl of Lincoln; 49. Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon; 50. Marshal, Earl of Pembroke; 51. Quincie, Earl of Winchester; 52. Fitzpiers, Earl of Essex; 53. Montfort, Earl of Leicester; 54. Nevile, Earl of Salisbury, &c. &c.

Besides not less than one hundred Anglo-Norman barons.

ROYAL.

All the chief branches of the Royal Houses of the Conqueror, Plantagenet, and Tudor.

FOREIGN ROYAL AND PRINCELY HOUSES.

1. Merovingian Kings of France; 2. Carlovingian Kings; 3. Capitian Kings; 4. Royal Houses of

Spain; 5. Emperors of Germany, of all the Houses. 6. Portugal; 7. Ancient Dynasty of Russia; 8. Many of the smaller principalities of France; 9. Several of the princely Italian Houses, as Visconti, &c.

Almost all these, with many more, are deduced by two hundred and fifty-two tables in the "Stemmata Illustria;" that work being confined to trace the descendants of Charlemagne, whose blood had flowed into the present author's veins.

It must be observed that I am not merely contending for equality, but for superiority. The present Royal Family, sitting upon the British throne, descends from the eldest sister and co-heir of King Henry VIII. I descend, and by heirship too, from the princess Mary Tudor, the youngest sister and co-heir of King Henry VIII. That princess, widow of Louis XII. of France, re-married Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. His daughter and co-heir, Lady Eleanor Brandon, married Henry Clifford, Earl of Cumberland. Their only child, Lady Margaret Clifford, married Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, whose eldest son by her left three daughters, his co-heirs. Lady Frances Stanley, one of the co-heirs, married John Egerton, first Earl of Bridgewater; whose son and heir, John, second earl, left, by Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, Thomas Egerton of Tatton Park, in Cheshire, his third son; who died October, 1685, leaving by Hesther, daughter of Sir John Busby,

by Judith, co-heir of Sir William Mainwaring, William Egerton, LL.D. his second son, born 1682, (prebendary of Canterbury; prebendary and chancellor of Hereford; rector of Penshurst, in Kent, and of All Hallows, Lombard Street;) who died February, 1738, leaving, by Anne, daughter of Sir Francis Head, bart., Jemima, his youngest daughter and co-heir, my mother, married in March, 1747, to Edward Brydges, Esq. of Wootton Court, in Kent, who died November, 1780, aged sixty-nine. She died December, 1809, aged eighty-two. These are younger branches: but has not the younger son the same blood as the elder?

I have been very much reproached for insisting on this co-heirship to the Tudors and Plantagenets. The truth is, there is nothing but charlatanism in modern nobility. They do not support themselves by any consistent principle. The best of them take any change of rule or argument which supports the pressure of the moment. There are old nobility, mediocrists, new nobility, and *parvenus*. I am not sure that the mediocrists are not the most mischievous of all, because they are most inclined to veer. Among them are some of the richest of our nobles; and they are very jealous of the aboriginal peers. When a *parvenu* speaks slightingly of birth, every one knows his motive and its non-effect.

Without deciding the question whether birth

ought to prevail beyond a certain point, I assert that if it prevails in one case, it ought to prevail in another. Persons should not be allowed to veer about from riches to birth, and from birth to riches; or from individual to hereditary, and from hereditary to individual. If there were any practical means of deciding individual worth with correctness, let individual worth rule. It seems as if Providence had, for its own mysterious purposes, ordained otherwise. It has arranged that for the quiet of society an hereditary aristocracy is best. But then there must not be the evils of both without the advantage of either. The selfish passions of mankind have made wealth so operative that it wants no aristocratical aid.

The number of existing peers who are derived from the male stocks of the Anglo-Norman barons is very few. I derive myself from one of those male stocks. We have stood with difficulty the waves and weathers of time, and have had many a hard battle to fight. We have been stripped of our foliage, and our arms mutilated and laid bare: the naked trunk only remains—hoary, knotted, and barkless; shaking to the blast, and its roots uncovered; often exposed to the blows of the axe, which has hitherto rebounded from it, blunted, defeated, and in despair. It has stood in the dark night of the storm, desolate in the forest, with no companions or shelter to break the fury of the winds.

It has been often said or hinted to me, "Why does your mind dwell so much on pedigree?—it looks as if you did not rely upon yourself. *Tuâ virtute te involve!*" Certainly accidental circumstances have made me harp upon it more than I otherwise should have done. I have been more especially irritated by the long withholding from me my legal rights of inheritance.

It has been my fate to be crossed at every step, while others have been cheered on through life without obstacle. The answer made to me has been,—"You have been crossed because you had no merit which deserved encouragement!" Thus one wrong has been heaped upon another; and to this habit of insulting me perhaps these memorials are mainly owing. Whether I shall have succeeded in setting myself right remains to be proved. I have a few kind and honourable friends, men of high fame too, whom I protest against its being understood that I mean to include in these reproaches. But, alas, my best and oldest friend is gone to his grave; yet, full of honours, glory, and riches.

I must here leave this chapter to defend itself. There are some whom it will make furious: but I stand upon a rock.

CHAPTER XIII.

Author's habit of metrical compositions—His disregard of polish—No one can please all tastes—Authors should go their own way—Piquant characters required in autobiography—Walpole's letters to Sir Horace Mann—A bad habit to make every one ridiculous—This does not convey true knowledge—The author has not designed to write a jest-book—The author's gravity—Sorrows make every mind sober—The jester may be unhappy under his mask—Don Juan — Milton — Gray—Cowper—Gray's fastidiousness—Burns—Poets not always in their sober senses—Their lives rarely furnish many facts—The multitude love a narrative full of action.

THAT sort of metrical composition, which I venture to call poetry, I accustom myself to write with as much ease as prose. If the thought, or sentiment, or image, is good, it cannot be destroyed by any carelessness of language. On the other hand, triteness, feebleness, or want of nature and truth, cannot be preserved by style and polish. I always differed on this point with my late lamented friend and critic Lord Tenterden; and I could adduce a passage from one of his late letters, not a little piquant on the subject, and in strong opposition to my theory and practice,—though I am not very willing to bring forward such an authority against me. It is

said that Burke wrote and re-wrote many times, but his changes were probably mere insertions and additions, as in reading his proofs his rich and inexhaustible ideas multiplied upon him.

It is impossible to please all tastes;—to abandon one's own way for another is a certain mode of incurring failure. There is no end to fears of objections or cavils. He who is not prepared to disregard these, ought to throw down his pen at once.

The first thing which catches almost every reader in an autobiography is a large infusion of those piquant characters of contemporaries, which make them ridiculous, and seem to let us behind the curtain, and draw the veil from their concealed qualities and habits. I have not yet seen the letters from Horace Walpole to old Sir Horace Mann at Florence, lately published; but I have seen a few extracts. From these I infer that they are more of this nature even than any thing of Walpole which had previously appeared. To seek out nothing but the ridiculous in every one we meet or know is carrying the jest too far. The jest is thus turned into gall, and can spring from nothing but gall. Most men have some ridiculous points about them, especially if a little exaggerated, or taken by themselves, or placed in false combination; but the heart and spirits sink when we find a representation of nothing else. What is more fatiguing than an unbroken series of carica-

tures? Readers think that they thus get knowledge of mankind as they are. They deceive themselves: nothing is less like real life. All the world is not a comedy of fools and villains.

Though there is nothing which catches so much at first as anecdotes of this kind, yet in the end they nauseate, and after one or two perusals are not returned to—at least till they have been forgotten, and thus regain a second novelty. They are Will-o'-wisps, which mischievously mislead.

Of this sort of matter it will be complained that I have not given enough;—but I have not intended to write a jest-book. I am not entirely unfurnished with sarcasm; but I am of too grave a humour often to indulge in it. I have been said to have an imperturbable gravity, which is not, however, true. We are driven sometimes to laugh in bitterness of woe, as Gray says of "moody madness." But if there is a sympathy for what is absurd, there is a sympathy also for sorrow and melancholy. Moral expositions, axioms, opinions, reflections, sentiments, are ore of a durable value—if they have strength, justness, sincerity, raciness, and are unborrowed. There are moments when the pressures and misfortunes of life bring almost every mind down to soberness; and then it finds consolation and sympathy in a grave author, whom at other times it might have deemed solemn and dull.

He who takes the character of jocoseness seems

to assume to himself a superiority over the evils of life: but under his mask of a jester is often a woeful countenance and a torn heart. We laugh at the absurd lights in which Don Juan places many serious subjects;—but we lay down the poem dissatisfied with ourselves for the momentary pleasure we took in it. And when Byron in his letters affects irony and the *falsetto* of merriment, we revolt from a kind of insincere bravado, and search for those other few letters where his heart breaks out. A feigned hilarity is like a child in the dark, who sings or whistles to frighten away the ghosts.

It is said that we take up books to amuse us, and that we do not want instruction. Do we not as often take them up to learn whether others are as unhappy as ourselves? If we have any curiosity about an author, do we not most want to know his secret thoughts? In Milton's general works we seize upon every passage relating to his own private feelings and thoughts. And so we do in Gray's letters. When he throws off his little banter and half-irony, which have too much of a petty quaintness and affectation in them, and lets the fulness of his heart speak in its melancholy sincerity, we are deeply touched by his eloquent pathos and profound morality.

Cowper's playfulness is more natural and *naïve* than Gray's; but, when grave, he was not so deep, solemn, or sublime, nor so original and

inventive. Cowper's lines on his mother's portrait are among his most exquisite pieces, and most characteristic of his own peculiar strain of moral pathos. There are images of simplicity in it which Gray would never have ventured; though Gray was at least equally devoted to his mother's memory, and had still more reason for it.

Gray had a fastidiousness, which nothing could have so far overcome as to have enabled him to have written memoirs of himself. He had a sort of excessive delicacy and fear of ridicule, which amounted to morbid disease. His recluse habits nurtured this defect. The lowness of his spirits was partly owing to the miseries of his childhood. He had some *petitesses:* he had the vanity to wish to be considered a fine gentleman. But if he could have been persuaded to write his own memoirs, he would have given us many curious and inestimable opinions and remarks, which were buried with him in the grave.

Burns was one of those men who overflowed with thought and feeling, and he could have made a rich memoir of himself. It is not every man of imagination who watches himself, and turns his attention intensely inward. There are light thinkers, who see every thing only upon the surface.

No poet is at all times in what are called his "sober senses." And some of these states of delirium are such as no one can relate but himself. Letters are considered to answer—at least

in some degree—the same purpose as memoirs; but they are more diffuse, more interrupted, and often more disguised; and when addressed to an intimate they omit many things as already known to him, which may not be known to the public. I would rather have letters as an appendix to a life, but they interrupt a narrative, and I am always dissatisfied with a biography where they form the principal feature.

It rarely happens that a poet's life furnishes many materials of fact—almost the whole is intellectual activity; and this does not interest the common reader, who cannot relish or apprehend what is abstract, but can only understand truth when embodied and exemplified by persons, events, and substances. He, therefore, who would make a book for the perusal of the multitude, must not take the life of a poet for his subject: for even if that life should have been busy in action, he must not dwell on the parts most interesting in his poetical character.

I anticipate that the readers of these memorials —if there shall be such—will cry out for more story, more anecdotes, and at least a few wonders. But I must say that such a taste would be most gratified by the life of a highwayman or housebreaker, for such a life must be full of surprising events and hair-breadth escapes. I remember, when I was a child, that I was deeply delighted with such reading.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lee Priory Press established in 1813—Works printed there—The author then so occupied that he had little leisure for original composition—"Sylvan Wanderer," and "Bertram"—"Restituta"—"Raleigh's Poems"—Collections of Elizabethan poetry—Dispersion of curious libraries—The author's devotion to bibliography—Its uses—Character of Tom Warton—Innocent enjoyment in the love of books—Roxburghe Club—Commencement of the author's love of bibliography—When it ceased, and the cause—His satisfaction that the passion is gone by—Neglect of original composition censured — Extract from "Edinburgh Review" regarding Burns—— Non-concurrence with part of the Reviewer's criticism on Burns —Why his songs are his most excellent poems—The author's regret at not having exclusively cultivated original composition—Genius often wants self-confidence — Technical critics on poetry and fiction generally wrong—Representations of artificial life—Nice criticism neglected by the vulgar—Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Miss Burney—Genius should be encouraged to go its own way —Mere propriety deemed excellence by many—Use of extravagant stimulants reproved—True genius can only utter what it feels—Power of genius to transplant itself into the character of another—To raise surprise, an effort of minor genius—Common readers delight in plot—Mischief of literature becoming a trade—Inferior and mean writings more adapted to sale than good—The frivolous pleases fashionable readers—Nothing good in writing can be contrary to truth and wisdom—But the mob does not love truth—This often renders genius silent—What is genius, disputed?—The dispute not reasonable—It may be precisely settled—The misery of being at the mercy of the capricious opinion of individuals—Tests of what is most excellent in poetry and in prose fiction.

IN 1813 a compositor and a pressman (Johnson and Warwick) persuaded me with much

difficulty to allow them to set up a private press at Lee Priory. I consented, on the express condition that I would have nothing to do with the expences, but would gratuitously furnish them with copy, and they must run all hazards, and of course rely on such profits as they could get. In defiance of these cautions on my part, they put me and my son to continual expences, by applications for pecuniary assistance, though they sold what they printed, as limited to a very small number of copies, at very high prices, which book-collectors were willing to purchase for a time as curiosities. The press was not finally given up till about December, 1822.

The reprint of rare tracts, especially poetical, was of some use to our old English literature; such as poems of Nicolas Breton, and William Browne, Raleigh, and Margaret Duchess of Newcastle; Davison's Rhapsody, Robert Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Lord Brook's Life of Sir Philip Sydney, and the Duchess of Newcastle's Autobiography. The typography was good, and some of the wood-cuts, engraved by Nesbit, &c. were beautiful. During almost all that time I was busily engaged in attending parliament, and taking an active part in endeavouring to amend the poor laws and copyright act, &c. I believe my son paid Warwick's debts to the amount of two or three hundred pounds when the press was given up. I was then at Geneva. These prin-

ters might have done very well if they had been decently prudent. The two quarrelled as early as 1817, and Johnson quitted.

I had not much time for original composition while this press was at work. The two chief were, essays called "The Sylvan Wanderer," and a poem called "Bertram," which I wrote to please the printers, and which I value least of all my poetical compositions. A second edition was printed by Bensley, in 12mo. I made some attempt in it to follow the Drydenic freedom of versification. But the story is an imperfect one, and my mind was at that time harassed in a very opposite course of thought. It was written by fragments, as the printers pressed me for copy. At the same time I was carrying on the "Restituta," and many other things. I performed a more useful work in collecting together the "Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh," which have been reprinted in the Oxford edition of Raleigh's Works, in 8 vols. 8vo. I printed also in the "British Bibliographer" new editions of those very scarce collections "The Paradise of Dainty Devises" and "England's Helicon;" and, in conjunction with Mr. Haslewood, "The Mirror for Magistrates." These form a body of the scarcest old English poetry of the Elizabethan age, in conjunction with the "Heliconia" of Mr. Park; and all the prose tracts of poetical criticism of that date have been reprinted by the extraordinary

and accurate industry of Mr. Haslewood. An Elizabethan library is now to be had by reprints. Thirty years ago none but rich and fortunate collectors could get at most of these books. The British Museum was then very deficient in them. The dispersion of the libraries of Pearson, Farmer, Lort, Reed, Stevens, Malone, the Duke of Roxburghe, Hill, and many others, enabled many of these reprints to take place. The "Censura Literaria," Ritson's "Bibliographia Poetica," &c. &c. contain numerous bibliographical notices of them, useful to literary history.

At one time I gave myself up rather too ardently to these pursuits, and lost too much time in them. They have a tendency to weaken the mind by occupying it with trifles, and by exercising the memory rather than the imagination or the reason. Rarity does give some degree of intrinsic value to a certain class of old books—as illustrative of manners and the progress of language;—but he who takes up this amusement is almost always apt to lay too much stress upon it. I am myself at length quite cured of it. Tom Warton knew best how to make use of such books.

There are few characters on which I look with so much complacent interest as Warton's. His temper was so sunshiny and benevolent; his manners were so simple; his erudition was so classical and various; his learning was so illuminated by

fancy; his love of the country was so unaffected; his images were so picturesque; his knowledge of feudal and chivalrous manners was so minute, curious, and lively; his absence of all worldly ambition and show was so attractive; his humour was so good-natured and innocent; his unaffected love of literature was so encouraging and exemplary—that I gaze upon his memory with untired satisfaction.

What life can be more innocent, or more full of enjoyment, than a life spent among books, under the control of taste and judgment! I do not think that Warton was of the highest order of genius: he had not enough of warmth and invention; nor dare I say that he was the more happy for this want. But still what pure pleasure must have been continually experienced by him who could write the "Ode on leaving Wynslade!"

In June, 1812, I was, by the nomination of my friend Dr. Dibdin, elected one of the original members of the Roxburghe Club, of which the history and the list of the distinguished members is well known. Latterly the Club had the glory of adding Sir Walter Scott to its associates; and what greater name could it have?

I was fond of bibliography from the age of thirteen, and began at school to collect editions of Horace. My love of books till the last seven years was a passion and a fever. It abated with the sudden decay of my spirits in autumn, 1826,

and has never returned. That decay was owing to the shock experienced at the full exposition of the villanous conduct of my agents, which now showed itself in such glaring colours, and in so utterly reckless a manner, that there was no escape from the conviction. I would have crushed them then if I had had my own way; for the full proof was in my hands. It is now forthcoming when the occasion calls.

I am not sure that in all respects I regret that this book-fever is gone by. It withdrew me from original composition—and for original composition I flatter myself that I am not without copious faculties and acquirements. For those who are capable of original composition, all time spent in compilation, or any other of the minor labours of literature, is in my opinion grievously lost. The best intellectual powers thus stagnate; and from growing feebleness one is afraid to go alone. The memory is but a deceitful and misleading talent, and its humble usefulness can never satisfy inborn endowment. Nobody who has not innate gifts can write but by memory or extracts;—but every one who has such gifts does not exert himself to write from his own resources; and when he does not, he wastes and throws away what nature has bestowed on him.

I often look with astonishment at the extreme rarity of original composition, or original opinion.

It is not my purpose or practice to make up

these memorials of citations and extracts from others; but I must for once give a passage from the "Edinburgh Review" (Dec. 1828, p. 269) on Lockhart's "Life of Burns," as to biography:—

"Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, modify him from without; how did he modify these from within?—with what endeavours and what efficiency rule over them?—with what resistance and what sufferings sink under them? In one word, what, and how produced, was the effect of society on him?—what, and how produced, was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions in regard to any individual would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in biography."

This passage does not very strictly connect itself with what immediately precedes it; but it has accidentally opened upon me, and I cannot lose the opportunity of inserting it, lest it should be forgotten. It justifies the plan on which I have written these memorials. My purpose has been not to dwell on outward circumstances, but

to give a picture of mind. I have therefore related what was the effect upon my intellectual faculties of this accidental pursuit of bibliography. I do not doubt that it suspended for many years the cultivation of those internal fountains, and the bringing out those fresh waters, on which I most pride myself.

There are several other criticisms or expositions regarding the genius of Burns in this article of the Edinburgh Reviewers, which, however ingenious and beautiful it is on the whole, I confess I either do not understand or do not agree with. But in that great trait of the poet's genius, on which they insist—his sincerity—I entirely agree. I think they do not give him sufficient credit for his imaginative invention. They speak of him as most powerful and excellent in describing realities experienced in his own individual character. I entirely concur with them that his immortality will be founded on his songs; but principally on those which were written in an imaginary character; and these on the extraordinary force of nature and feeling with which he supports such a character into which he has thrown himself. In this lies the greatest spell of poetical genius.

But my present business is not with Burns. Convinced as I am of the truth of my own theory, I grieve and fret myself that I have lost so many years of my long life in omitting to exercise this

sort of probable fiction, which appears to me the most useful and instructive mode of embodying and illustrating abstract truth. Whatever be the plentifulness of the internal fountain it will not flow at once. Many will object that I had it not in me—or that I should have shown it earlier. I know that I have it in me; but, alas, I have now no time remaining to let it forth. Such a power does not come for the first time on the verge of seventy-one.

There are those who hold that want of self-confidence is a proof of want of genius; but such an opinion has so little foundation that it is not worth refuting. Self-confidence is often brought out by accident; and often suppressed and broken down by accident. But it will not give genius, though it will fan the flame.

That flame, when it is most smothered, will now and then give a gleam of its internal burnings. There will be a flitting spark or two, which heaves up the covering ashes, and then intermits. The fire comes from heaven, and the dead mould of earth will not blaze by any fanning, or toil, or artifice.

Another question is connected with this of want of self-confidence. Will false criticism suppress or divert the course of real genius? Surely, if it acts at all—as it often does—it may have this effect. Genius, through fear of erroneous pre-

cepts, may not put forth its exertions in the line where its own strength lies. In poetry and fiction almost all the doctrines of the technical critics are wrong. They put forth the secondary and unessential for the primary and essential. If true genius is thus misled to struggle for the unessentials, it fails.

Authors of prose fiction have been called upon to represent life in its artificial, accidental, and temporary state. High genius disdains this; and is less qualified for it than vulgar observers. Adventitious manners are the result of outward facts, and can be observed by technical toil; but the workings of universal nature, the inward passions and impulses, can be only penetrated by clear and sagacious genius.

But these are nice expositions which perhaps the common reader will not care about; and it is to the common reader that the numerous sale of a work must be adapted. But an author of genius must not sacrifice his fame, and the indulgence of his best powers, to the obtainment of a numerous sale. All such parts of the novels of Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, and Miss Burney, as belong to temporary manners, have long ceased to interest. What tiresome and nonsensical things are the old French romances of Louis XIV.'s days!

There would be much greater bursts of genius

if every one of superior and unborrowed faculties was encouraged to go his own way at his own peril. Works of unsophisticated genius are very rare: and I firmly believe they are so rare, because critics divert them from their native excursions.

What is called propriety, or an accordance of supposed faults, is deemed excellence by many. On this principle the first excellence would be, not to write at all. It puts one in mind of the Duke of Buckingham's famous repartee to Dryden's line—

My wound is great because it is so small!

on which he is said to have exclaimed,—

Then 'twould be greater, were it none at all!

We hear about the delight of high finish. Why, this high finish takes away all strength—it is a petty taste. It is demanded by those who have no bold or tender feeling, and are made up of artifice.

There is another sort of writers, who use extravagant stimulants, and what, in the cant of vulgar language, are called "clap-traps." The fame lavished upon these authors damps true genius, which will never debase itself by a resort to such means of exciting attention. Genius, under the dominion of involuntary inspiration, can only speak or write what it feels. He who can by the

force of imagination transplant himself into the character of another will feel, without seeking for it, what that other would feel. But this is not applicable to artificial characters and manners, because there is no nature there to act by general impulse. All is there whimsical and accidental. What depends on costume is ridiculous to all but those who adopt it.

Those impulses and sentiments, which only operate by surprise, are efforts of minor genius. All that is most sublime, most tender, and most beautiful, arises in the ordinary course of things. What is raised by unexpected collision, stirs no more when the plot is known: yet all common readers prefer this mode of having their interest raised. It is because sluggish apprehensions and sluggish hearts require violent applications to move them.

It is a vile evil that literature is become so much a trade all over Europe. Nothing has gone so far to nurture a corrupt taste, and to give the unintellectual the power over the intellectual. Merit is now universally estimated by the multitude of readers that an author can attract. And all wise and experienced persons know, that bad and mean writings, of particular tendencies, will secure tenfold the number of readers of good and high productions. Popular authors cannot bear to admit or hear this. But how can it be otherwise?

Will the uncultivated mind admire what delights the cultivated? Will the rude and coarse enjoy what is refined? Will the hard be touched by the tenderest pathos? Do superficial thinkers come to the same conclusions as the profound? Do the low endure the reasonings which justify subordination? Will the butterflies of fashion encourage any marks of distinction but their own gay colours? What number of readers would the "Paradise Lost" find, if now first published without an established name?

In all good writings nothing ought to be uttered contrary to truth and wisdom; and it ought not only to be truth, but high truth. But the mob do not love truth—they relish only what feeds their appetites and passions. If genius had only reason, integrity, feeling, and taste to appeal to, it would be safe; but it has to appeal to corruption, prejudice, selfishness, and ignorance. It has to contend with men who are hired to obscure what is clear, and pervert what is straight.

In this state of things genius is often silent, and often sinks into despondence. It begins to mistake the pre-eminence of its own faculties for defects, and to hide its head before audacious charlatans and fools.

I know it can and will be disputed what is genius, and what right I have to take my own theories for tests of it. I have only the right of

what shall appear by the authority and practice of the wise of all ages and nations to be reasonable;—by those compositions which have stood the trials and chances of time; and by the admitted opinions and allowed definitions of the philosophy of the human mind.

If our judgments wander about at the mercy of individual whim, and literary productions can be arbitrarily pronounced good or bad, an author is cast into a miserable state of caprice and servitude. The highest order of mere human compositions in literature must be the imaginative creation of what is lofty, and pathetic, and fair, and has verisimilitude. Therefore there can be no doubt of what is genuine poetry, or the best prose fiction; nor of what is most excellent in those departments.

CHAPTER XV.

An author's assertion of his own claims regarded for nothing—No one will do it for him—Triteness popular with the mob—Publishers consider nothing but vendibility—The voice of the multitude gains every day more dominion—Few have firmness to contend against the world—Trash-publishers—The public mind is in a state of false excitement—English classics—Spread of Literature—Penny Magazines—The only unalloyed pleasures arise from intellectuality—Fanatic enthusiasm—The author's canons of criticism not truisms—They are contradictory to many works received with favour—Coarse morality better than none, but not like the morality of a refined imagination—Few metrical writings are genuine poetry—Such discussions appropriate to an author's life—How accuracy in psychology is to be attained—Genius of Burns consistent with his life—Biography the most attractive of reading—Men desire to appear in a false character—Use of autobiography to the author—Great pleasure in the due exercise of the mind—Use of knowing ourselves—Metaphysical disquisitions not popular—Jesters popular—Genius must cheer itself—must support its own dignity—Justification must not be kept to one's own breast—Confidence of the ability to produce light—Autobiography may do this—Difference between theory and practice—Sincere authors—A poet not by accident—Not a poetical artist—The charm of art soon evaporates—To show satisfactory enjoyment in literature is a moral lesson—Worldly ambition hollow.

It is pretended that the memorials of an author, in which he sets forth his own claims and views, go for nothing. I believe, on the contrary, that if he does not do so, it will rarely happen that any

one will take the pains to do it for him; nor can any one else do it in the same degree and with the same accuracy. An author of an original mind proposes to himself some sort of merit by which his writings shall be characterized; as, for instance, force, or subtlety of thought, or natural and glowing sentiment. All materials supplied by others can be taken from one as they have been taken by one; but he who expresses his own ideas in his own language cannot be plagiarized.

Trite arguments or trite facts, in trite language, are perhaps better calculated to be popular than what is more recondite, because they are more easily apprehended by the multitude of common minds; but after a time the authority of superior faculties and tastes prevails. In every sentence of what is written by genius there is the beam of a higher light—a sort of spirituality, which at once distinguishes it from the vulgar. In the immense mass of writings which daily issues from the press, there is but little of this: all is but a faint, secondary, and technical plausibility.

But publishers do not look to permanent works; they only look to immediate sale. I presume they do not find a slow sale pays them the interest of their money. In these days, when all sale depends on management and fashion, and not on merit, authors must be entirely dependent on booksellers for the success of their works.

Readers now demand such books as will flatter them in their opinions and feelings, not such as will lead and instruct them.

How are these evils to be overcome or met? Will not literature sink under them? I think that the voice of the multitude has every day a stronger and stronger influence over it; and so far it must decline in taste, intelligence, and loftiness. Critics join the mob, and judge by the rules and measures of their standard. A genius therefore who would be popular, must write down to the popular thought and sentiment. Of this, many of the fashionable authors are glaring instances. Those minor talents which can better accommodate themselves than such as are strong and great, have thus an opportunity of gaining notice.

Few will be firm enough to contend long against the world; the generality, therefore, in due course of time let their faculties deteriorate. The present age, while it is more conceited, is intellectually far more feeble than the precedent, as well as much less learned. There are trash-publishers, who deal solely in this depreciated currency, and who, like a country bank of a speculative ambition without capital, force out their over-issues by trickery and manœuvre. When once we relapse recklessly from sound thinking and sound taste, the mind falls gradually and imperceptibly into the most pitiable imbecillities, errors, and absurdities.

The public mind is at present in a state of false excitement. This is partly owing to the agitation of the political crisis. Most of those subjects of literature which formerly interested it have now lost all their attraction. Poetry is, I am told, entirely neglected, and poetical criticism considered too abstract for the stirring passions of the day. What are called the English classics are little called for, and still less read. I am not at all sure that this will ever come right again till after a succession of dark ages, and another restoration of learning.

What is called the spread of literature is in my opinion a very doubtful good. I say with Pope, "Drink deep, or taste not." Formerly, no doubt, the mob had a lower class of books than at present, but then they did not set them up for the best.

But so long as the Penny Magazines make a good selection of articles from the best works, they are beneficial. None can long accustom themselves to just and elegant composition, without becoming disgusted with that which is vulgar and mean.

Our whole human existence, when made the most of, is intended to derive its only unalloyed pleasures from intellectuality. "The common air, the sun, the skies," only give pure delight in this way by the force of spiritual associations; but these associations cannot be brought forward

except by native, simple, and unlaboured genius. All studied heat produces a false, fantastic, and fanatic enthusiasm, like the dangerous and hypocritical warmth of religious frenzy. Genius, like pure piety, indulges in no extravagances. Many have clear fancies, which are like reflecting mirrors, but cannot originate images, forms, and colours. The faculty of origination is exclusively an inborn gift; and illustration, ornament, style, metre, are separate and minor merits;—they are the merits of the workmanship, not of the ore. The prettinesses of language are but an idle amusement of the mind.

It will be reproached to me that these are truisms which every one already knows. If they are so, why are they not applied as canons by which to estimate the productions which the press every day vomits out? If they are just, then many works which are received with great favour and praise have little title to such distinction. They teach nothing moral or intellectual, nor ever touch the chords of the heart. They have but the momentary and useless brilliance which the tool of the artisan gives to the trinkets of a jeweller's shop,—all gewgaws, which add nothing to human happiness or comfort.

There is a coarse morality which is better than none; but it is not like the morality which is exalted by a glowing and refined imagination, which derives its duties and its pleasures from the

spirit, and lives more by idealism than by materialism. Such an endowment and temperament, so cultivated, goes far to put one above the injuries and chances of fortune; but if it be a mere dress worn for show, and not inwardly felt, it is worth little.

How happens it that few metrical authors can abide an investigation on these principles? Thousands must be born with the seeds of poetical faculties. It must arise from a neglect of due culture.

I have an unwavering conviction that the honest attempt to elucidate these subtle and difficult topics is strictly appropriate to the memoirs of an author's life. Is it not his business to examine how far he has pursued a right path, and how far he has made use of any talents Providence may have given him? Where he is conscious of having been wrong, there is some amends made, and some consequent satisfaction in the confession. It is only by turning our observance inward that accurate information in psychology can be acquired; and who shall guess at the secret movements of the heart but by a similar study?

The Edinburgh Reviewer remarks, that the genius of Burns is more exhibited in the course and character of his life than in his Poems. This perhaps is going a little too far; but if so, we could not have duly estimated his powers without adequate memoirs of him; and no doubt we esti-

mate literary productions more satisfactorily when we are made fully acquainted with the author's personal history. If that history be amiable and congenial, it gives a double zest to his writings.

Of all sorts of reading, biography is the most generally attractive; and self-memoirs, if frank and sincere, are the most attractive of all. I scarcely know one publication of this latter class which one would be content to burn.

It may be said that almost all men wish to appear to the world in a character which does not belong to them, and that by their own pens they will most probably pourtray themselves in that character. Experience proves that this has not been the case with autobiographies; and that many things have been thus known and admitted to be true, which would otherwise have died with the writers.

To themselves there can be little doubt that the handling this subject will be of much use: it will bring them to a close self-inquiry which they might otherwise never attempt. Thus they may detect their own faults, and confirm themselves in what they have commenced rightly.

There is no pleasure at all comparable with the due exercise of the mind: then man feels himself in the superior vocation Providence has assigned him, and that dissatisfaction which attends human frailty vanishes from his being. He escapes from the ordinary visitation of human cares, and frees

himself from the surroundment of those fellow-mortals and their passions, which constitutes one of the great irritations and dangers to which life is exposed. While others sleep in a state of insensibility approaching to non-existence, he is in the full experience of his best happiness. He has a consciousness that his powers increase as the years go over him, rather than diminish; and as the light opens upon him, and objects grow clearer and clearer, he rejoices in his own improvement, and feels in better humour with himself and all around him. This effect is a proof that such labours are congenial to the best faculties bestowed upon us: it is like the rapture of emerging from oppressive darkness into exhilarating light.

To know ourselves, and be sure that we are virtuously nursing the seeds which nature has implanted in us, is to give a complacency to that conscience which never ceases to work: and whatever expounds the mysterious qualities and subtle processes of our intellectual state, will give information which some at least will be found capable to appreciate. Will any one contend that a mere narrative of facts—and of which the internal movements are unexplained—is more instructive or more appropriate than this?

"Oh, do not give me," cries the superficial reader, "these metaphysical disquisitions. Let me have anecdotes to amuse me, and events to

make me stare." The profound must submit to the imperfections of humanity, and yield popular notice to the jester and the mountebank.

But genius must cheer itself, or no one will cheer it. It must not shrink away into the shades and be silent, because it is too high for the mob: if it be cowardly, it drives its own fire inward and consumes itself. With outward humility there is often inward pride, which is collecting poison round the heart. The fogs and pestilent vapours of corrupted society are sent forth for mischief, and rejoice in blighting the nobler efforts of the mind. These efforts, therefore, must become proportionably firm, and shield themselves by all courage.

Mind must not be wanting to a just support of its own dignity, instead of resorting to humiliating defences and apologies; but it is the system of some to let the world have its own way without disturbance. Prejudices uncontradicted will never cure themselves; and he who submits to calumny without resenting it is a fool. It often happens that one has a justification for one's thoughts or acts, which, if it is kept to one's own breast, no other can penetrate or guess at. At the same time it must be done at one's own peril, for a weak justification is worse than none at all; and this perhaps is the real reason why so many are silent under attack or misrepresentation.

When they who are not in a state of fanaticism

or false enthusiasm wish to work upon the minds of others, it arises from a calm conviction that the picture of their own thoughts and feelings will communicate useful light. Doubtful intellects are aided by seeing the likeness of themselves reflected from the bosoms of others whose impressions are more strongly marked: he who can act as the reflector, has an inborn impulse to show his power.

Autobiography gives him this opportunity, not indeed exclusively, but in common with the treatment of many other subjects,—yet perhaps more than any other subject. In other subjects he speaks of these things upon general grounds; here from personal experience. Individual opinions have a liveliness and force which awaken especial interest.

Between theory and practice it is admitted that there may be a wide distance: a sincere author is therefore anxious to show how far the character of his mind and heart agrees with the whole tenor and scope of his writings. It was this agreement which was so delightful in Burns. I say then that I have not merely written imaginative things, but the whole joy of my life has lain in the pleasures of imagination. I boldly assert that I have not been a poet by accident, but by incontrolable nature; and I have not confined those imaginations to the feelings excited by realities and personal events, but extended them to the im-

pressions naturally appropriate to the ideal characters with which it is a poet's business to be conversant. I have never written verses as an artist, and I think that he who does so is not a poet; but I confess and grieve that I have not followed up my own theories of what is best in poetry nearly to the extent I might have done, and I feel shame that it has been for want of courage to stem the tide impelled by the false force of technical criticism.

The strength of art strikes at first, and then evaporates,—like the colours of Sir Joshua Reynolds' paintings. It is only genius which is simple and naked, and trusts to the vigour and beauty of nature. A gaudy style or ornament is never genuine power; but, alas, it always catches the multitude.

If my experience has proved to me that my literary pursuits have made the only satisfactory enjoyment of my life, do I not give a useful moral lesson by declaring it to the world? If I have found that worldly ambition is hollow, feverish, and dangerous, do I not perform a duty to say so?

CHAPTER XVI.

The author almost as fond of biography as of poetry — Poetry does not depend on style — Extravagance censured — Subjects of poetry unexhausted and inexhaustible — Monstrosities — The people do not love what is natural — Burns — Milton's opinion that a poet's life ought to be poetry — Necessity of incessant thought and reflection — Union of powers necessary — Rigorous tests — Revival of forgotten matter — Why bad poetry is read — Why good poetry is unpalatable—Wordsworth—Byron's thoughts of a mixed kind — Uncertainty of literary criticism — Unqualified critics—Many admired critical articles are unintelligible—Political influences—A critical biography wanted—"Bayle's Dictionary" —Evils of false pretensions being confounded with genius — Men of mere learning—As authors become more numerous, pre-eminence becomes more difficult — Editors of forgotten books — The author has thought for himself — Egotism the essence of autobiography — Pretended humility—Buoyancy—Contentment in obscurity—Cowper's merit in teaching to be content with rural seclusion and obscurity—His poetry keeps its proper vocation—The beauty and merit of reconciling man to a humble lot — Desire to bring others to our own opinions—Worldlings deceive others as to their talents by force of manner — Genius and talent have lost the respect formerly paid to them — Aristocracy and pedantry are not smoothed down — Life represented as a heartless comedy — But no real joy in this comedy — Genius should not descend to the arena of worldlings—A sublime poet has cause for melancholy—Byron's perverse vanity—Difference of Rousseau's Confessions—Silliness of being vain of fashionable society—*Parvenu* tuft-hunters — Grandeur of thoughts necessary in a poet—Mode of proving it—Ceremonial self-biographers.

I AM not sure that I have not loved biography almost as much as poetry: many say that I have

succeeded better in it. I should be unwilling to admit this; because, however instructive, it is of an inferior order to poetry,—though it cannot be well written without eloquence and the light of imagination. It is not for me to decide a question in which more impartial judges differ from me. But, as far as I can examine myself, I cannot bring myself to believe that I want that invention which constitutes poetry. If indeed this invention lies in flowers, and similes, and metaphors,—then I want it. Perhaps also I want terseness, and uniform formality of style, which Tom Warton, speaking of Mason, called *buckram*. But he who thinks that poetry depends upon style, has very narrow ideas. The noblest language is Milton's, though it is almost always naked, and often harsh. It is all nerve and sinew, rejecting all interposed expletives which give smoothness. The common taste in poetry does not rise above prettiness of illustration and harmony of metre.

I do not concern myself whether skill of execution is conceded to me; I have at least had all the joys of poetical feeling,—nor do I envy those who have wasted their energies in the mechanical parts of this class of composition. He who is at leisure to examine this mechanism, is too sober for poetry. To my taste there is no sort of writing, of which the perusal fatigues as much as this. I prefer the dullest prose. It is true that low and vulgar language will destroy the spell, but not

free and unequal language; nor the very plainest language that can be found. Labour is apt to produce exaggeration; and exaggeration soon nauseates. There are parts even of Byron which are not free from this great fault. But there are those who mistake ease and nature for insipidity and weakness.

When writers of fiction have recourse to extravagance, it would seem as if all the topics of native imagination were exhausted; but this is so far from being the case, that scarce one in a million has been touched. That finer perception, which is necessary to arrest them, has been deficient in these exaggerators. They are invisible to common eyes, thick and innumerable as they are. It is the purpose of genuine poets to embody and fix them, and render them distinct. They are no sooner drawn out than the imperfect impressions in the breasts of others come forth and acknowledge them. But false images are received only by force, and the marks soon close up again like tracings upon sand washed by the waves.

There are certain idealisms which there is a predisposition in the human mind to admit, as there are certain seeds which are congenial to particular soils. Yet, because they are natural, the frivolous and cold-minded do not regard them, but seek strange hot plants which are useless, and perhaps unwholesome.

There is nothing so difficult to persuade minds

of secondary power, as well as the mob, as that what is neglected can be good. They contend that what strikes the multitude most must be best. Hence that icy reception which freezes true genius; and hence the fanning of the factitious heat, which forces into life monstrosities.

Pert ignorance cries, "What do we gain by a picture of nature? Every one can see nature with his own eyes. We want something beyond nature." It is true that all can gaze upon the moon, but do they gaze upon her silver light with the eye and feelings of a poet? We cannot too often bring into notice that beautiful and often cited passage of Burns, extracted by the Edinburgh Reviewer:—

"We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring,—among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn,—that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear one loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling the eleva-

tion of soul, like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing. Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? or, do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."

I must be forgiven for citing two or three lines only from one more beautiful passage of this Reviewer :—

"The words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this : 'he who would write heroic poems, must make his whole life a heroic poem.'"

My business is not to make up these volumes with extracts from other authors. It is now nearly thirty years ago since I myself endeavoured to give a character of Burns in the "Censura Literaria." I have not that work within my reach, and do not remember what I said. I have sufficient confidence in myself to believe that I said nothing inconsistent with my present opinions.

One of the purposes which may justify self-memorials, written after a long life, is to tell the sincere conclusions and feelings which the sobriety of

age has impressed upon one. These may be of little value, however, except from a mind sagacious by nature, and improved by cultivation. They must speak for themselves, and run the chance of making the impression intrinsically due to them.

If any one deems himself such a luminary that he can sit still, and let the light shine from him on the eyes of all men without any effort of his own, he must be left to his own delusions and impenetrable conceit. What is to be done must be done by incessant thought and reflection.

In the work of authorship it requires great nicety of discrimination, weighing, and calculating, to decide who has been really useful. Neither originality, force, nor nature, will do by itself; but all must unite. Unqualified authors consume time, and unsettle the public mind. Every book ought to contain something valuable, which is no where else to be found. This, it will be said, is to impose rather severe tests. Is it not sufficient to revive, and draw the forgotten into notice? Perhaps new combinations of old ingredients give new light. Few authors show real power of thought; and even of those who can think, few show imagination or feeling. Do not let it be concluded that a seeming display of imagery is always evidence of a genuine imagination. This display is often technical, and a mere trick of the memory of words. There are nume-

rous compositions which look like rich poetry to the eye, but have not a gleam of the spirit of real poetry in them. In real poetry there is an indefinable spell of the breath of a higher life, which transports us like the fresh exhalations of morning. In false poetry we read and read, but we get nothing but words which raise no ideas.

How then is bad poetry read? Partly by fashion and as a task, when neither bad nor good is really felt; partly because when it does convey ideas, it conveys those which are striking from their extravagance. It will be urged that these are the doctrines of a discontented man, put forth to justify tameness and resent neglect. The accusation will be unfounded. Simplicity and truth must not be mistaken for tameness, nor unsophisticated sincerity for crudeness and indigestion. Nature is never wrong—art seldom right.

The best poetry deals in what is lofty, and refined, and pure. As a large portion of society are corrupt in their morals and thoughts, this may render such poetry unpalatable. Can an impure heart relish the holiness and spirituality of Milton? Can they who are imbruted by sensual sin enjoy those high contemplations which sharpen regret and reproach? The skill of artifice they can enjoy, because it does not interfere with their feelings. Milton enjoys his reputation by mere authority, not by popular sympathy.

Some have the feeling which arises from deep

thought,—and some, from first impressions. Of the former, Wordsworth is a distinguished example. But for this he truly observes, that the soil must be prepared before it will be capable of receiving all he purposes to teach. I very much doubt whether Byron would have been so popular if his thoughts, passions, and sentiments had not been so mixed. There is enough in them to soothe and flatter the loosest morals. It has been observed fifty times, that Byron had two natures which were always conflicting with each other; and therefore he never was happy, nor ever in the same humour a day together; and, almost before he had uttered the last words of the highest pathos, would break out into the coarsest ribaldry and most daring hard-heartedness, as if ashamed of the tenderness in which he had indulged.

If these remarks are just, it is very important to enforce them on the public attention. The right knowledge will assist genius and discourage charlatanism. The mass of the people require to be continually directed in their intellects; and it matters little in what shape or on what opportunity it be done, so that some mode is taken of doing it. A thousand interests and passions are alive to mislead, but how few are prompt to correct and explain the truth. A mercenary selfishness overrules all principle; and a reckless disregard of what is magnanimous lets prejudice and ignorance

take their course. *Qui vult decipi, decipiatur,* is the cry.

How happens it that when all the principles of poetical genius are so clear, and it is so easy to apply those principles accurately to the execution, that there can be so much difference of argument, judgment, and taste, in literary criticisms upon it? I do not refer to popular feeling on the motives to charlatanic authorship: these may be accounted for in the way I have already mentioned.

It seems to me to have mainly arisen from the utter inadequacy of most of those who have taken on themselves the censorship of the public press. Even among those of undoubted talent and eloquence there is often a great confusion of ideas on this subject; and I have read many admired articles, which are to me quite unintelligible, nor do I believe that the writers understood themselves. Part of this comes from writing for hire; part from under and secret views of political interests, for the purpose of decrying authors of an opposite faction, or exalting those of the critic's own side. The chief journals are more influenced by political than literary motives. Indeed there is not at this moment in England a purely literary review.

There is a great work which is at this crisis much wanted, — a strictly critical biography. Since "Bayle's Dictionary" nothing of the kind

has been even attempted. If it be not a contradiction, I would say that such a work ought to be written with a severe candour. It is highly mischievous to literature to confound fraudulent or vain pretensions with genius, talents, or learning; and to make fame cheap by conferring it on those who have little merit. All frivolous names ought to be struck out of a roll which comes forth under the denomination of a record of eminence. A list of the candidates for the temple of fame is quite another thing, and should be made up by other rules; but the admission should be guarded by a stern and unbending examination.

Men of mere learning also should stand in columns by themselves. But what thousands of authors start up who have not even learning—who can neither copy with judgment, nor even apprehend what they repeat! Are such men to be encouraged in their blundering work by having notice conferred upon them? The more the number of authors, the more honour there ought to be in attaining pre-eminence; because the more there are to struggle with, the less chance there is of winning. So when Horace Walpole said of Sir Philip Sidney, "he was a hero, but it was an age of heroes,"—his remark was a very foolish attempt at depreciation.

I am aware that there are those who may exclaim with a taunt, "Some men imagine themselves authors, because they edit some forgotten

book." I have done so; but I assure them that I do not imagine myself an author on that account. From the age of fifteen I have inquired and thought and felt with intensity, and been haunted by visions of my own. On the verge of seventy-one I can perceive nothing of what I then thought, or felt, or imagined, or wrote, of which I am now ashamed. My thoughts and sentiments have stood recorded in print from my age of twenty-two, and they may be in the hands of the most rigorous virtue to comment upon. "What arrogant egotism is this!" the censor will cry. Egotism is, no doubt, a mighty and impertinent offence in a work of autobiography. But it will be observed that one may speak about self without self-praise. Humility of words is very common with those who have the reverse of humility in their hearts. There is a self-conceit, or self-complacence, which enables many to affect humility. I have no such feelings of self-satisfaction; and this, perhaps, makes me feel it necessary to endeavour to do myself justice. It is for the blind, the ignorant, and the unfeeling, to be puffed up with conceit. Cast down I have often been; never despondent as long as my mind had dominion over my body. My misfortunes have far exceeded the common lot of humanity, and my wrongs have far exceeded my misfortunes. Under all these oppressions and privations, I believe, that from the buoyancy of my spirit, I have enjoyed as much

happiness as most men. I have no doubt that luxuries add little to human pleasure: they produce either *ennui* or fever. I can live upon as hard fare, and with as few of the vanities of life, as a labouring peasant; and at length I can live in obscurity and neglect without regret or dissatisfaction. When the mind is purified, our animal wants are few. But over gross and ungenerous indignities I have not yet become an entire master. The day and the night I can occupy in intellectual occupations without fatigue; and thus shut out the world.

Cowper said, that he thought he was giving useful lessons to the world in his "Task," by teaching them to feel and value the innocent and exquisite pleasures of the country, in a safe, and calm, and humble retirement. And no doubt he has solaced thousands, and purified their hearts and their imaginations. Here poetry is in the full performance of its best moral duties. Such are not idle strains poured forth to soothe and occupy the fancy with frivolous ideas.

In the unequal lots of ranks, and riches, and ease, and luxuries; and of poverty, labour, and seclusion, to brighten the mind of outward privation, and reconcile us to the seeming difference in the opportunity of enjoyment, is the noble purpose and result of a noble occupation.

What I have taught myself I have endeavoured to impress upon others; and I still endeavour to

impress it in a new shape. We are always desirous to bring others to our own honest opinions.

They whose sharpness is derived not from natural talent, but from intercourse with the world, deceive people by their manner: all lies on the surface; they have no sense at bottom. They estimate every thing by a few unessential and temporary forms and fashions; and in their hours of privacy they have no resources and no guides. Whatever upholds these delusions is bad: whatever dispels them is profoundly beneficial. These petty exclusives deserve no credit, but ought to be objects of contempt.

Literature and the respect for talent and genius have fallen very low. By thus throwing down the barriers of classes and ranks, we have the bad parts both of aristocracy and pedantry without the good of either. Silly fashion is not less foolish; and pedantry is not less arrogant, unbending, and absurd. In this temper all sorts of invidious attempts are made to depreciate, as tedious, supererogatory, and out of date, whatever is grave and profound. And there is a system of representing life as a heartless comedy, in which he who has most face, most animal vivacity, most craft, and most management, will carry the day. Life is not a comedy; and there is no real joy in perpetual jests. They who live in the hilarity and noise of perpetual society, and in the stirring movements of the crowds of mankind, are often as weary

of existence as others who pass their time in loneliness and melancholy contemplation.

Genius ought not to be seduced to leave its high places, and descend to the arena with base worldlings. Poets may rule public affairs if they will descend to them; but so long as they remain in that descent, they will cease to be poets. It is quite impossible that a sublime poetical genius should be otherwise than melancholy; for he must always feel afflicted that the realities of our human state are so inferior to his imaginations. His senses are too fine for the atmosphere in which he is placed. Let the wise and the virtuous come forward to justify their own lofty acquirings; and let them scorn to accommodate themselves to what befits the breath of the vulgar. They have the ascendant if they choose to exert it, and may tread those who attempt to chain down their wings under their feet.

Byron had the strangest and most perverse of all vanities—the desire to surprise the world by showing, that, after all his sublime and spiritual flights, he could, on nearer inspection, be the lowest, the coarsest, the most familiar, and the most sensual of the low; and this, it is said, he exhibited in the MS. autobiography which was burnt. This is a most incomprehensible fact,—even more incomprehensible than some of the mad Confessions of Rousseau. Byron's, perhaps, arose from the vanity of wishing to be considered

a man of the world, and a man of fashion—a very mean and contemptible wish. I scorn hypocrisy; but who in a sane mind would blacken his own character with disgraceful vice beyond the truth?

What honour could it have been to Lord Byron to have lived in fashionable societies, or indulged in fashionable irregularities? Was he less great as a boy in penury and seclusion, issuing from an humble dwelling in the town of Aberdeen, and sitting lonely on a rock to gaze upon the northern ocean, and hear its waves dash upon the shore? If blood is blood, it cannot be changed by a narrow fortune; and, as to rank, what distinction could Byron derive from associating with his own rank? Supposing the circles, of whom he formed a part after his return from Greece, were the *élite* of the nobility, on which it is not necessary to enter, what honour could he gain by them? And if he had been a *parvenu*, it would have been still worse, because a tuft-hunter, and a runner after titles, is always a mean being. I never saw one of this disposition who had not a littleness of heart and a feebleness of head.

A poet should show himself to have grand thoughts and grand sentiments in his own individual character. But how will he do this? Will his own assertions be taken? May he not clothe himself in an imaginary character? The answer is, that the credit given to him must depend on the internal evidence of his truth, and the concurrence

of the details with what is externally known of him. Still it may be said, that if he deals in vague generalities, he will not easily be detected in false representations. But there is a sincerity of manner, and earnestness of expression, not easily put on.

There are certain ceremonial self-biographers, whose flourishes we regard as little as the inquiries of an acquaintance after one's health, or parting words at the termination of a common visit. They do not lay any thing open beneath the surface; and they do not even profess to do so. If inward workings are not frankly disclosed, nothing valuable is done.

CHAPTER XVII.

Something more than love of fame necessary to spur us on to a life of literary toil—The desire of grasping our thoughts by the test of language—Demand for narratives full of bustle and action —Cause of this popular taste—These readers like what is beyond their own experience—This the reverse of a narrative of opinions and feelings—Darkness of intellect, a cause of misery—Intellectualists require little intercourse with the world—Inseparability of thought and language secures the author in its property—Cowley, Addison, Johnson, and Burke—A visionary character recorded —Desirableness of anecdotes of poets congenial to their characters —Scott in the Hebrides—Byron on the Genevan Lake—Dante, Chatterton, Collins, Bampfylde—Jests and sarcasms reprobated— Spell-destroyers—Condemnation of them—Preference of the loneliness which nurses grand and beautiful visions—Slaves to the world are miserable—Calmness and independence of retirement— Right thinking and right feeling—To effect this is a poet's grand purpose, and not to describe worldly craft—What is the business of a wit—Solitude charged with encouraging theory without practice—How far fame operates in solitude—Cold philosophy now prevails over high enthusiasm—Poetry flourishes even among savage nations—Imaginative visions, a part of our being—Defence before attack—Justification—How far his literature answered to the author—Testimonies in the author's favour not obtruded—Eminent men—Literature the author's first passion and his last—His industry—His habit of writing in the night—The cruel injuries his property has suffered—Scepticism on this subject may be dispelled by the Thellusson case—Accused of warm fancies—His temper passionate—His susceptibility of affront—A whirlwind described—Lenham-Heath Camp in 1781—Hall-Place, in Otterden, Kent.

Is there not something beyond the love of fame which still spurs us on to write after fifty years of

toil? It is to clear up our ideas, and dispel the mists which trouble our mental vision. Till we have embodied our thoughts in language, we are not sure that we distinctly grasp them. When we deal in the thoughts of other men, we find the language already prepared for us; but there is a double operation in eliciting the thought and finding the words for it.

Do I go over ground already trod smooth, and which wants no farther opening? I persuade myself that I do not: I think that many of my topics are subtle and require much elucidation, and that it is an object of just curiosity and ambition to endeavour to settle them clearly. Many moral topics of great interest have started up; and if they have been commented upon with force, these pages will not be useless. I have entered upon a large field of literary views, and applied them to the incidents and feelings of a literary life with a practical sympathy much closer than any mere theory could have suggested. Such is the advantage of introducing these discussions into biography rather than into essays: they thus a little partake of the nature of exemplifications.

I full well know that a bustling narrative full of facts, and anecdotes, and surprises, and dangers, and escapes, would have interested the general reader ten times as much; but I cannot alter the lot which fate has imposed on me. I am not now

writing a fiction, but a life, such as has actually taken place; and if the course of intellect be not interesting as well as action, I may lament it, but cannot reverse the order of things. But what instruction is there in facts encountered by him who does not know how to observe or comment upon them? But a novel, sentimental and descriptive, never engages the popular attention like one full of action, plot, and intrigue.

Why is it that an account of action interests so much more than an account of thought?—Because the mass of mankind are so much more materialists than intellectualists. Thought indisposes us to action; and he who seeks excitement only from external objects has a very barren mind. One single fact would prove the public taste. Of what books are the critical journals most full? Voyages and travels. Yet after a year or two almost all those works are forgotten, and go to the pastrycooks and trunk-makers. The breath of life is not in them. Mallet wrote the Life of Bacon, and forgot that he was a philosopher. Who does not condemn this absurdity? Is the life of one who has given up his time to poetry to be written without filling it with poetical discussion?

A narrative of actions engages attention in proportion as they have not happened, and are not likely to happen, to others: a narrative of thoughts and sentiments is valuable in proportion

as they are applicable to all. But publishers will exclaim with Hudibras,-

> The value of a thing
> Is just the price that it will bring.

What sells so well as the relation of a murder or a *crim. con.*?

If we pass our existence here in the darkness of understanding, I will not say that we are always miserable, but we ought to be so. Our business is to enlighten our internal being, and contemplate the world with a clear and sagacious apprehension: he who finds the means to improve and invigorate those powers in others is a public benefactor.

The intellectual need not go into the world and active life, except to furnish a sufficiency of a few material images or incidents to hang their visions upon. Writings endure in proportion as strength and vivacity of thought are in them. Facts soon become dead matter, and produce no fruit. When the thoughts and the language are so intermingled that they cannot be separated, then the property of the thoughts remains in the author as long as the thoughts survive. This is the case with Cowley, Addison, Johnson, and Burke: above all others it is the case with Shakspeare.

I once knew a person (but he died young) who seemed to me literally inspired. He looked upon the grand and beautiful forms of inanimate nature

as if they were endowed with a living spirit. When the trees waved their boughs in the air, he believed that they were talking in whispers to him; and he saw forms in the clouds that bowed their heads, and lifted their hands, and spread their wings, oracularly to him. He spoke little, but commonly appeared in a delirium or dream, and was very fretful and angry when he was interrupted. He wrote fragments of what he saw and heard, but he had not yet arrived at a full command of language. He drew the outlines of a sort of visionary epic, mainly composed of spirits. His imagination was much stronger than his reason, but yet he had a subtle and powerful intellect. He contracted an attachment to a beautiful girl, whose form was almost as lovely as he thought it, but whose mind was unworthy of him; and I suspect that he died of this attachment, for it touched his sanity. Indeed, independent of this passion, common observers deemed him not sane; but if his inspirations were not reason, they were something nobler than reason. He was a magnificent creature,—scarcely a being of this earth,—and I have never ceased to lament his loss with a mysterious and indescribable regret.

If we could have anecdotes of poets congenial to the colours of their spiritual temperament, we might well delight in them; but not many such are to be found upon record: a few perhaps in the Life of Burns, but fewer in the Life of Byron

than might have been expected; and this from that false affectation of being a man of the world which I have already reprobated; and all this to degrade himself into an inferior character which did not belong to him. Let us have a picture of Scott, steering about through the islands of the Hebrides,—lifted upon the foamy waves or cutting through them,—lost in meditations of some future romance, yet not so lost as to forget his smile of benignity, or to be unready for a *bon mot* or a jest, or to be inattentive to the scenes and manners around him. Let us see Byron on the Genevan Lake, crossing those fickle waves in a tempest, and troubled with the ostentatious and irritating feast of *Coppet*, preferring the dangerous conflict of the winds and waters to those flashes of angry and dazzling passion. Let us see him in the woods of Ravenna, talking to the ghost of Dante, and forgetful of his own black misfortunes. Let us see Chatterton with the bowl of poison before him,—Collins in the calm and melancholy intervals of his shrieking delusions,—and Bampfylde, neglected, and lonely, and poverty-struck, on the Alpine mountains, yet cheering himself with poetry and lost in the bosom of the Muse! But do not let us be afflicted with the absurdities of common life,—with the heartless *bons mots* which make every thing ridiculous,—with the jest that destroys the spell of all that is high and lovely,—with the sarcasm that endeavours to

prove that every thing grand, or tender, or virtuous, is only an empty delusion.

These spell-destroyers hold that the noblest poetry is but a delirious, impossible, and dangerously-delusive vision;—worse than drunkenness or a fever, because it lasts longer; and far more mischievous, because it is covered with laurels which render it attractive.

Why do we wish to believe that imagination and intellect do not exalt men above the herd of vulgar mortals? Is it envy, and jealousy, and base love of detraction? Is it gratifying to encourage the love of darkness and low passions? If it be proved that the poet is sometimes like common beings, is it to be concluded that he always is so? And why are we to seek out the evil and neglect the good? Why are we to fix our eyes on what is deformed, and overlook what is beautiful? Are ugliness and vice to be taken for nature, and what is great and fair for the dream of an empty enthusiasm?

I am willing to live alone rather than that these dreams should be disturbed. I shun the scoff of fools and the repulsion of hard-heartedness: I will leave them to go their own way if they will let me go mine. Nature implanted in me ideas and sensations which will not coalesce with the mob.

They who are slaves to the world undergo a most miserable sort of servitude: they know not

what it is to be at peace with themselves, or to have a manly and dignified thought or sentiment. Thus the evils of poverty become aggravated tenfold, and all the wants and desires of life are tenfold augmented. If we shun the world and despise it, our wants are few and simple, and then we become calm and self-complacent in our independence; but if we enter the field of competition with the world, all is anxiety, fever, and fretting for requisites which we cannot command. To be virtuous under such temptations demands almost superhuman fortitude.

It is the tendency of almost all the highest poetry to withdraw us from these trials; and how can moralists act more beneficially than by producing this effect? We cannot command or change society, but we may live apart from its provoking and degrading follies. Almost all happiness depends upon right thinking; and we cannot think right in a crowd, and as little can we feel right.

A main business therefore of a true poet's biography is to impress these lessons,—to show how the evils of our earthly being may be overcome by exaltation of spirit and intellect, and to give dignity to severity of morals and nakedness of outward condition. It is not to lay open the inward movements of the busy, intriguing, and crafty part of mankind, and to render the reader skilful in them,—but to warn him to fly them, to

rise above them, and despise them,—to substitute nobler pleasures for the pleasures of worldly aggrandisement, and to make mind prevail over matter, and the visionary over the gross.

He who in common language is called a wit, has nothing to do but to tell the brilliancies of conversation, the collisions of rival observers, and the comic effects of the marked manners of those who spend their existence upon the public stage in conflicting groups; but this is to encourage all the passions which wisdom and virtue ought to do their utmost to control and eradicate. There is no fear that the love of solitude will prevail too far: the love of company has a general influence, and leads to all vice and corruption.

It will be said that in solitude we may have but a theoretic love of virtue, and that the great lesson is to teach us to practise it amid temptation; but these practical biographers teach us no such thing,—they only teach us to be cunning and sharp, or hypocritical, or hard-hearted.

There have been moments when bosoms of flint have in some accidental solitude been melted by a great effort of genius, and called to reflections which have operated on their future life.

But of what use is fame in solitude, where it cannot reach our ears, and where there is no one of whom to take place? We may answer that intellectual virtue ought to love fame, because it will give effect to the lessons which it is its duty

to communicate. Nor is this the only value: however capricious the public may be in the fame it confers, it cannot but instil into the receiver more confidence in himself; and wherever nature has been bountiful, self-confidence is very beneficial.

We do not live in an age of high enthusiasm; a cold philosophy has damped and extinguished it. There is an attempt to bring down every thing to a matter-of-fact sort of utility; but things must not be tried by their mere material fruits. Even the common labourer for his daily bread could not solace his existence, and go through his toils, but by the aid of some pleasures of mind.

Poetry is in use among the most savage and uncultivated nations, and dwells upon visions of the past and future. It associates with its remembrances of material imagery and actual facts, the revival of the thoughts and feelings that accompanied them; and these are exercises of that distinction of humanity which it behoves us to awaken and strengthen. Do not let us forego our nobler intellectual sensibilities to gratify the corrupt appetites of the reckless worldling; and do not let us be driven from these pursuits by the false stigma of false sages—that they are vain and frivolous.

The imaginative visions which are mystically inscribed on the inward mirror of the soul are as much a part of our being as those impressions

which external objects make upon us through our senses. The magic of the poet's spear brings them out to be read by all the world: is he, in his self-memorials, to say nothing of this magic and its processes?

"Why," it will be exclaimed, "do you defend yourself before you have been attacked?"—Because I foresee that I shall be censured for filling so many of my pages with eternal discussions about poetical associations, and poetical uses, and poetical humours. What have I undertaken to write about? Not war, or state, or cabinet secrets, or public men of business, or travels, or voyages, or fashionable people, or fashionable manners, or dinings-out, or wits, or clubs, or good sayings; but the feelings, and occupations, and views of a solitary man, who has given up a long life to literature and contemplation. The question is, how it has answered; whether he repents of it; how it has operated on his disposition; where he acknowledges mistakes and misapplications; what time he has thrown away; where he considers himself to have received injustice; where and why he is confident, in defiance of attack; and how far he consoles himself under misfortunes and wrongs.

If I have with me a few of the best in genius, intellect, learning, and worth, why should I regard the multitude? Southey, and Lockhart, and Wordsworth, are indeed a host to me. And a

word or two of praise (as appears from a passage inserted by Moore) escaped in one of Byron's journals. He knew not with what enthusiasm I had hailed him from his first appearance.* I had also the delight of a few kind and cheering words from Scott. I might mention some other honourable names, but I am not sure that they would excuse the liberty.

I now declare that, as literature was my first passion, so it is my last. It is the most innocent, the least expensive, and the least exhausting: and this I say, notwithstanding I feel that I might have done twenty times as much as I have done, and in paths far above those that I have attempted; and yet I have not been altogether idle. Now calm, and raised above the world, few of those things that deeply mortified me formerly, mortify me any more. Is not this a lesson in literature worth telling? I have been robbed far worse than Thellusson's property has been robbed; and now perhaps that Thellusson's case has been proved, the public will believe the possibility of such things. Stupid optimists of false candour, when such things are told, hold their breath and look wise,—as much as to say, "This is one of your warm fancies!" In such a case I find it difficult to refrain from spitting in their faces, or knocking them down.

* See the "Biographical Peerage," 1808. vol. II.

And here let me confess that I am very passionate, and very quick to take affront; which add to my unfitness for society.

While I am writing this sentence, a mighty whirlwind over the Lake is shaking the leaves from the trees in a most magnificent manner. I love the movements of the tempest; and the blasts can never be too loud for me, however awful. One of the noblest nights I ever passed was in Lenham-Heath Camp, in autumn, 1781 or 1782, when the rain fell in torrents, and the wind blew up almost all the tents. I slept deeply, for I was much fatigued: the roaring of the wind only encouraged my slumber.

In those days the family of Burton, American refugees, with whom I was intimate, resided at Hall Place in Otterden; and their house was most hospitably open to the officers of Lenham Camp. Mrs. Burton was a beautiful woman, who not long afterwards died of a consumption at Bristol. Her father was the loyalist minister of Boston: her brother was the late General Sir Samuel Auchmuty, K. B.: her sister was Mrs. Tylden, mother of Sir John Maxwell Tylden. At that time I thought this lady, then unmarried, as handsome as she was lively and agreeable; but she was surrounded by twenty military *beaux*, and I was then only nineteen. The hospitalities of Hall Place yet dwell upon my memory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pleasure of writing poetry lies in the occupation, not in the fame—Biography which falsifies facts and enjoyments is mischievous—Satisfaction from teaching moral truth—The author's doubt as to a favourable reception of this work—His suspicion that more of jest and anecdote will be expected—The jester not always gay at heart—"Young's Night Thoughts"—The author professes to moralize—Citation from his earliest poem—Liability to self-delusions—What seem repetitions are often not so to nice examiners—Cavils—Call for plotting and pruning—Objections may be found to every thing—Taunts and sarcasms—Authorship pleasureable, but dangerous—Scylla and Charybdis—Frankness—Autobiography has done more good than harm—Will disclose the author even against his will—The peril is exclusively the author's—Vanity will gratify itself at any cost—The author has sought no vulgar distinctions—Difficulty of good writing—Danger of the assumption that one is a good writer—What is necessary to qualify one for a good writer—The author's regret at not having exerted all his energies—The blessing of high mental enjoyment—Petty ambitions reprobated—Imbrutement from low thoughts and feelings—The world's loss from non-culture of high gifts—Genius often goes to the grave unknown and undeveloped.

If hereafter, when I am in my grave, any one should read these pages, who feels within him the flame of a poetical imagination, and the ambition to dedicate his life to attain the honours of a poet, let him know that I only recommend the culture and the pursuit for the sake of the pleasure of the

occupation, and the spirit of independence and moral feeling it will encourage. If his principal desire be fame, the chances are that he will long be kept in a state of feverish expectation and uncertainty, and perhaps be disappointed at last: and if he mingles with it the passion for worldly aggrandisement, and the wish to be popular among his neighbours and acquaintance, he is almost sure to be defeated and cast down.

Varnished facts, and false pictures of enjoyment, form most mischievous biography. He who is amused at the expense of being misled, buys a guilty pleasure; and all guilty pleasures end in pain. If what I recommend is more plausible than true, then I commit a moral wrong. But if it be true, though less entertaining than error, then I shall have my reward. Abstract morality and metaphysical exposition may appear dry to the light reader; but if it be well-reflected and just, it will at last find its way into the heads and hearts of those who know how to appreciate wisdom. It seldom happens that a work of deep and accurate thought is finally neglected. What is merely sharp and piquant loses its zest when it becomes stale.

I look back with some doubt on this work, as far as regards the public acceptance of it. I have little doubt that many will think it too grave, and that it dwells too much on general reflections and opinions. Yet if they look to the name of the

writer they will have no reason to expect any thing else. I never pretended to swim upon the full tide of life, nor to busy myself with acting; nor to court the great, the fashionable, or even the justly-distinguished. I always advocated seclusion and meditation, and books, and simplicity of life. If they therefore shall expect in me tales of the world, or anecdotes "which set the table in a roar," it will be their own faults should they be disappointed. I do not deny that there is much attraction in such reading. But, *ne sutor ultra crepidam!* I have neither the experience of this knowledge nor the capacity for it. I am a lonely, melancholy, moralizing man. I have neither wit, nor humour, nor readiness, nor the vivacity or tact of the world;—but cultivate in solitude grave sentiment, and the dreams of a visionary imagination. I have a congeniality with Shakspeare's Jaques, who has attracted some interest among the more thinking part of mankind.

But the jest and the laugh are not always pleasant even to the most social and noisy. The gayest will have their hours of soberness; and sometimes when misfortunes soften the heart, even they will sympathize with the mournful strains of the Muse of tears and complaints. It is strange that "Young's Night Thoughts" were favourite poetry with the multitude;—but I must confess that I suspect much of this power of interest over their hearts is the result of exaggeration. I can-

not consider these poems to be written in true taste; and I have generally found their admirers to be among those who are not easily moved.

But these proofs that gravity and melancholy are sometimes relished are sufficient for me. Do not let me be tried as if I set up aims which I abjure. I profess to moralize, and record my feelings—have I wandered away from my purpose? If my morality is wrong, and my feelings are absurd, I must take the consequence. If, though not erroneous, they are trite and dull, the reader will do right in throwing away my book.

> But if my song
> Should, as it breathes, illume the brow of care,
> The sluggard rouse, or bear the faint along,
> Shall I for self alone have labour'd here?

These are lines from my first sonnet, written in my twentieth year. I have been uniform in my ambitions and hopes. Fifty-and-one years have passed over since this sonnet was written.

The human mind is no doubt liable to great self-delusions. I may suppose that to be new which is as common as dirt, and that to be strong which is feebleness itself; and, if it costs me pains to bring it out, I may therefore deem it to be valuable and deep. But though these delusions may prevail, they do not often prevail to a great degree. I may also write what others may consider to be a repetition of the same thing over and over again;

but I warn them to examine nicely before they make this censure. What seems identity on a light view, may on farther search be found to have important differences. All those evanescent discriminations, which are of such profound interest to the psychologist, escape common eyes. I shall be content if the value of the ore be found at last, though it be long before it shall be appreciated; and if it have sterling worth, found at last it will be.

When one is conscious of having pondered with incessant industry, for a long life, on these subjects, one is not willing to let them pass away like the clouds, without leaving a trace behind. I have always had an anxiety to clear my mind of the mists that perplexed it, and thus my brain has never rested from its busy investigations. Are all these pains to go for nothing? I have felt an irresistible impulse therefore to hazard what I have elicited; and, if I fail, it may be said of me, as of one who

——— magnis tamen excidit ausis.

I am not bound to anticipate all the petty cavils which may be made to what I have written. I hear the cruel pruner cry, "Blot, blot!—expunge, concentrate, polish, be terse!" Let me go my own way, or I cannot go at all. I cannot go in shackles—I must take the chance of inequality of paces, and of sometimes overrunning the mark,

and breaking the line. What matters it if I sometimes reach the goal and win? It is better to be superfluous than scanty, and copious than dry. We may reject what may be supererogatory; we cannot supply what may be wanting.

But to what may not objections be made? If nothing is to be done till it can be secure against objections, then every thing must be left undone. The coward who will venture nothing deserves nothing. When there is strength, and power, and wisdom at bottom,—attacks, however ingenious or severe, will neither depress nor weaken. Taunts and sarcasms are most difficult to resist, even when reason is on one's side. Suppose it to be said, "Why does this man trouble us with his life?—who cares about what he has thought, or felt, or done? He has lived a cipher in society; and a cipher he will go out." But let him not be cast down—unjust words will neither still nor change his nature: no; nor disturb him long, however clamorously and exultingly the numerous malignants repeat the cry with a jackdaw chatter.

There is pleasure and virtue in authorship; but it is a very dangerous and fitful occupation. We commonly enter upon it before we are at all aware of the caprices to which it exposes us. Charlatanism, or accident, may gain notice—high genius and merit may miss it. And who can be entirely calm under slights which he knows that he does not deserve? This leads to that desire to set him-

self right with the world, which perhaps increases the evil. However interesting autobiography may sometimes be, there is nothing so delicate and perilous. Scylla and Charybdis are not more difficult to steer between. Between vanity, presumption, and arrogance, on the one hand, and false diffidence on the other, how can he avoid to fall upon rocks? Frankness is of the essence of the merit of such works;—yet there are occasional reserves, which a sound discretion demands. One owes a duty not only to oneself, but also to others with whom one has had intercourse. Sometimes one cannot set oneself right without committing others whom one is willing to spare. "Then," it will be said, "leave the world to think what it will of you, as the lesser evil." It is true that the world takes the bad of all confessions, but refuses to believe the good.

Yet, altogether, I think experience shows that self-memorials have done more good to their authors than harm. Looking at all the materials of general biography, it seems that a memorialist's own account of himself has been commonly taken in its essential parts; and many things have been thus brought to light, which could not otherwise have been known, or would have been grossly misrepresented. Sometimes, also, much may be safely inferred from his very avoidance of particular topics.

If he has had credit for more talents than he

possesses, the account of himself is sure to blow up the delusion. He will expose some weak part, of which he is not himself conscious. It will be impossible to keep close the mantle in which he has hitherto been dressed. Words and manner are great deceivers in conversation: but what is written detects itself at once. Men of fluent lips often astonish by their weakness when they take the pen;—while they who can write, often cannot talk except with the utmost perplexity: but though they cannot talk, no one can doubt their command of ideas, if they can write well.

These considerations furnish powerful arguments in favour of autobiography: and as there are many strong prejudices against it, I have been the more inclined to insist upon them. The peril is entirely the author's; the public cannot lose by it. If he does not deserve well of the public, this will only more strongly display his demerit. But such is the rage to be talked of, that a great part of the world would rather be talked of with blame than not at all. Vanity is so insane, that many have committed crimes to be talked of, even for them. O frail and inconsistent human nature! O folly even of the bright, the noble, and the wise!

But am I among those who have been guilty of this frightful madness? I think that I am innocent of it. I have sought no vulgar—much less

dishonourable—distinctions. I may in self-delusion have sought that good fame to which I was not entitled;—but of that posterity must judge.

To suppose that good writing can be easily executed is contrary to all experience. How few good writers there are in any nation! Not one in two hundred survives ten years the occasion of his writing: while a topic possesses temporary interest, very ordinary authors will be read.

Such is the difficulty of being able to discover and communicate general truth or general sentiments;—for I presume that the distinction lies here;—and hence, the author of those who can express himself properly, lives through all time.

I must not dare to say that there is a self-consciousness of power on which one may venture to rely, in placing oneself among these elect. It is an arrogance that probably will not be forgiven. But he who belongs to the elect may be entitled to be heard when he speaks of himself. His temperament, his susceptibilities, his internal movements, are quite distinct from those of common mortals; and I am inclined to believe, that were he to persevere in a course of unmingled intellectualism, he might arrive at something like the bright faculties of an unalloyed spirit. But he must totally withdraw himself from all the ordinary means of human subsistence and occupation, and from all the bad portions of human passions. I am not sure that such a state could ever be,

arrived at, for I do not know that it ever has been; but it does not seem to me impossible, for I have found, by a short trial of two or three days, my state has been so much exalted and idealized as to make me a being of a very different order. Then I have relapsed again; and here lies the doubt,—whether the progression of such a state can be supported by human weakness. I foresee that this paragraph will be considered as a symptom of extraordinary enthusiasm; but it is not said lightly or ambitiously. It makes me regret with keen sorrow the idle and worldly way in which I have passed my life. I begin to be wise now that it is too late. I do not think that the mind will exhaust or tire if it is kept in due exercise, and protected by extreme bodily temperance, and the most spare and simple diet. We cannot positively exist without material food; but we can exist with incredibly little. Perhaps we may be brought to draw aërial breath, and almost feed upon it. Then little sleep may suffice for us; and nearly the whole twenty-four hours may be spent in mental toil. But the nerves must not be disturbed by the cares of life, and we must forget human sorrows. This is no poetical flight, but grave and sane opinion.

Such a philosophy—if it be philosophy—is consolatory; it makes us

O'er all the ills of life victorious!

and the ills with me are sufficient to cause a full

and earnest demand for it. I write this in the glare of broad day—not amid the mystical phantoms of the night.

But no one who lowers himself to the petty ambitions, and desires, and employments of the world, can do much. If his thoughts and feelings do not "imbrute," they mingle heavily with earthly alloy—and he becomes cloudy, dull, and languid. The imagination becomes darkened by too many gross material particles, and mean vexations poison the pure energies of the heart: then damps rise, and pestilent vapours veil the genial sun.

When souls of such beamy endowments come into the world, and suffer their rays thus to be mantled over, the wise and the sensitive must keenly lament it, if they are aware of the loss they have incurred. But how many go to the grave with their powers known only to themselves—and even to themselves but faintly! So it is that they are sometimes prompted to utter to the world hints of what they had hoped rather than per-

CHAPTER XIX.

Author's apology for inserting Southey's Letters in these Memorials—*First Letter*, (1829,) containing character of John Rampfylde, remarks on Kirke White, &c.—*Second Letter*, (1829,) remarks upon author's productions—Sonnet "On Echo and Silence"—"Censura Literaria"—Collins's "Peerage"—Gifford's aversion to Hayley—Moses Mendez, &c.—*Third Letter*, (April, 1830,) author's illness—Lord Buckhurst—Sydney—The son of Fielding—Fontaine's work on the "Eternity of Punishment"—Miss Austen—Richardson—Anecdote of Sir Thomas Robinson and the novelist's portrait—Romilly—Old age brings out family likenesses—Sir Edward Dering—Sismondi—Stanzas intended for colloquies, &c.—*Fourth Letter*, (June, 1830,) Gnomica—"Theatrum Poetarum"—Author's edition of Sir Philip Sydney's Life—Dr. Aikin's collection of English poetry—Lucien Bonaparte's poem—Portrait of Sydney—Likeness to Professor Airey—Sydney papers, &c.—*Fifth Letter*, (October, 1830,) author's characters of Romilly, Whitbread, and Lord Liverpool—Mr. Southey's remarks upon these statesmen—Sydney's "Stella"—"Euphues"—The Wellington administration—Church reform—Catholic question—Parliamentary reform—Irish union Infidelity and fanaticism among middle and lower orders—Sir Walter Scott's article in "Quarterly" upon "Life of Bunyan"—Life of Sydney—Conclusion of Southey's Letters—Letter of Hayley.

THE following letters to me by the Laureat contain such various knowledge, and such beautiful critical opinions, (except, indeed, in the kind and flattering thoughts which he expresses of me,)

that I hope I shall be forgiven by the truly illustrious writer for inserting them here. His correspondence forms, in a life of much wrong and suffering, a bright oasis, upon which fancy delights to look back and dwell with all the pride and enthusiasm of youth.

LETTER I.

CONTAINING THE CHARACTER OF JOHN BAMPFYLDE.

"Keswick, 10th May, 1809.

"SIR,

"I hold myself greatly indebted to you, not only for the list of authors, but for the very gratifying manner in which you have introduced my name in the 'Censura Literaria.' That list, with another of equal length, for which the selections were prepared for the press, but omitted during the course of publication by the friend who undertook to superintend it, will enable me, in an additional volume, to supply the bibliographical defects of the work. It gives me great pleasure to hear that 'Bampfylde's Remains' are to be edited. The circumstances which I did not mention concerning him are these. They were related to me by Jackson of Exeter, and minuted down immediately afterwards, when the impression which they made upon me was warm.

He was the brother of Sir Charles, as you say.

At the time when Jackson became intimate with him, he was just in his prime, and had no other wish than to live in solitude, and amuse himself with poetry and music. He lodged in a farm-house near Chudleigh, and would oftentimes come to Exeter in a winter morning, ungloved and open-breasted, before Jackson was up, (though he was an early riser,) with a pocket full of music or poems, to know how he liked them. His relations thought this was a sad life for a man of family, and forced him to London. The tears ran down Jackson's cheeks when he told me the story. 'Poor fellow,' said he, 'there did not live a purer creature, and, if they would have let him alone, he might have been alive now.'

"When he was in London, his feelings having been forced out of their proper channel took a wrong direction, and he soon began to suffer the punishment of debauchery. The Miss Palmer, to whom he dedicated his 'Sonnets,' (afterwards, and perhaps still, Lady Inchiquin,) was niece to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Whether Sir Joshua objected to his addresses on account of his irregularities in London, or on other grounds, I know not: but this was the commencement of his madness. He was refused admittance into the house: upon this, in a fit of half-anger and half-derangement, he broke the windows, and was (little to Sir Joshua's honour) sent to Newgate. Some weeks after this had happened, Jackson went to

London, and one of his first inquiries was for Bampfylde. Lady Bampfylde, his mother, said she knew little or nothing about him; that she had got him out of Newgate, and he was now in some beggarly place. 'Where?' 'In King Street, Holborn, she believed, but she did not know the number of the house.' Away went Jackson, and knocked at every door till he found the right. It was a truly miserable place: the woman of the house was one of the worst class of women in London. She knew that Bampfylde had no money, and that at that time he had been three days without food. When Jackson saw him, there was all the levity of madness in his manners; his shirt was ragged, and black as a coal-heaver's, and his beard of a two months' growth. Jackson sent out for food, and said he was come to breakfast with him; and he turned aside to a harpsichord in the room, literally, he said, to let him gorge himself without being noticed. He removed him from hence, and, after giving his mother a severe lecture, obtained for him a decent allowance, and left him, when he himself quitted town, in decent lodgings, earnestly begging him to write.

"But he never wrote: the next news was that he was in a private madhouse, and Jackson never saw him more. Almost the last time they met, he showed him several poems, among others a 'Ballad on the Murder of David Rizzio.' 'Such a

ballad!' said he. He came that day to dine with Jackson, and was asked for copies. 'I burned them,' was the reply. 'I wrote them to please you; you did not seem to like them, so I threw them in the fire.' After twenty years' confinement he recovered his senses, but not till he was dying of consumption. The apothecary urged him to leave Sloane Street, (where he had always been as kindly treated as he could be,) and go into his own country, saying that his friends in Devonshire would be very glad to see him. But he hid his face, and answered, 'No, Sir; they who knew me what I was, shall never see me what I am.' Some of these facts I should have inserted in the specimens, had not Coleridge mislaid the letter in which I had written them down, and it was not found till too late

[*There is a chasm here in the letter: it goes on.*]

"He read the preface to me. I remember that it dwelt much upon his miraculous genius for music, and even made it intelligible to me, who am no musician. He knew nothing of the science; but would sit down to the harpsichord, and produce combinations so wild that no composer would have ventured to think of, and yet so beautiful in their effect that Jackson (an enthusiast concerning music) spoke of them, after the lapse of twenty years, with astonishment and tears.

You have noticed the death of Henry Kirke White of Nottingham, whose 'Remains' I have prepared for the press. Should the enclosed specimens of his poetry please you, as I think they cannot fail to do, you will perhaps give them a place in the 'Censura.' They have never been printed. Had he lived, I am persuaded that he would have placed himself in the first rank of English poets.

There is a class of books, of which as yet you have taken no notice—the prose romances. They have had a greater effect upon our literature than has been supposed. In reading 'Amadis of Greece,' I have found Spenser's 'Mask of Cupid,' Sir Philip Sydney's 'Zelmane,' and Shakspeare's 'Florizel.' The latter, by name, going to court a shepherdess, who proves, of course, a princess at last. Was ever any single work honoured with such imitators? The French romances which followed (those of Calprenade, the Scudery's, &c.) were the great storehouses from whence Lee, and the dramatists of that age, drew their plots. These considerations may induce you to give some attention to them in your very useful work.

I am, Sir, with many thanks,

"Yours respectfully,

"ROBERT SOUTHEY."

"To Samuel Egerton Brydges, Esq.
Denton Court, near Canterbury."

LETTER II.

"Keswick, Nov. 14th, 1829.

"DEAR SIR,

"The account which I sent you so many years ago of John Bampfylde, as collected from Jackson of Exeter in conversation, is at your service, for any use that you may be inclined to make of it. I am pleased to find that you should think it worthy of remembrance and preservation. Your whole letter indeed would have been to me as entirely pleasing as it is full of interesting information, if it were not for the tone in which you speak of yourself and of your own labours. That you might have taken a high place among English poets, had you received the early encouragement which ought to have been given, and had you submitted to that patient labour without which no great work can be accomplished, I do not doubt: for I know not any poem in any language more beautifully imaginative than your sonnet upon 'Echo and Silence.'*

* After this high encomium I may be forgiven for transcribing a copy of this early sonnet, adding also a translation into Latin iambics by my very learned and accomplished friend, Archdeacon Wrangham.

ECHO AND SILENCE.

(WRITTEN OCT. 1782, IN THE AUTHOR'S TWENTIETH YEAR.)

In eddying course when leaves began to fly,
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,

Circumstances have led you to raise for yourself a distinguished reputation in another branch of literature, in itself of a very interesting kind. No

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As mid wild scenes I chanced the Muse to woo,
Thro' glens untrod and woods that frown'd on high,
Two sleeping Nymphs with wonder mute I spy!
And, lo, she 's gone!—In robe of dark-green hue
'Twas Echo from her sister Silence flew,
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky!
In shade affrighted Silence melts away.
Not so her sister.—Hark! for onward still
With far-heard step she takes her listening way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill.
Ah, mark the merry Maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill!

ECHO ET TACITURNITAS.

Hàc arborum atque illàc ferebantur comæ,
Autumnus et fruges sinu collegerat:
Sylvestribus Musam in locis, per devios
Calles vagus nemorumque noctem, dum sequor,
Somno graves Nymphas stupens video duas:
Enque evolavit!—Viridi amicta tegmine
Echo soror Taciturnitatem deserit,
Venantium namque ivit ad cœlum fragor,
Umbrisque territa liquefit Taciturnitas;
Secùs ac soror, properantibus quæ saltibus
Rupesque per collesque pernix emicat,
Audita longè, celere præcipitans iter.
Jocosa jamque Virgo voces milliès
Imitata lætum replicat, audin? per nemus.

Cestriæ, Januar. 1831.

other person, I believe, has contributed so largely or so well, to the materials for a literary history of England. And this, as it is a lasting benefit, will draw after it a lasting remembrance. I have profited, and hope to profit more, by these your labours, to which in due time I shall make my thankful and respectful acknowledgements. Your edition of 'Collins's Peerage' I have never chanced to see; but I have heard it so spoken of in various quarters, as to satisfy me that you have brought to that branch of our antiquities also the feeling of a poet as well as the diligence of a genealogist.

"You have then done much, Sir Egerton, for which to be remembered,—far more than many of your contemporaries, whose reputations will fade as rapidly as they have flourished. And if you have fallen short of your own youthful aspirations,—who is there that has not, if he aspired at any thing generous? Who that can afford to compare what he has done, with what it was once his ambition and his hope to do? Grey hairs bring with them little wisdom, if they do not bring this sense of humiliation.

"My paper upon Hayley in the 'Quarterly' (No. 62) was so offensive to Mr. Gifford, that, after it was printed, he withheld it from two successive numbers: and if he had not then ceased to be editor, and had persisted in withholding it, I might probably have withdrawn from the Re-

view. There neither was, nor could be, any reason for this, but that he could not bear to see Hayley spoken of with decent respect. Poor Gifford used to say, that I was not 'well affected' to the Review, because I protested against * *

[*Here is a hiatus in the letter occasioned by the part having been given to some autograph-hunter.*]

* * * * * engaged for such a work with a London publisher some four or five years ago; but the great failures in trade came on, and he withdrew from his engagement. But it has been in my mind full thirty years, and much of my reading in other languages as well as our own has been directed in reference to it. Your letter contains many interesting particulars, which were new to me, and some names which I had not before heard, or not remembered. Moses Mendez, if my memory does not deceive me, published a collection of poems by various authors in one volume, which I have seen bound uniformly with Dodsley and Pearch. I have now upon my shelves (a schoolboy purchase) the 'Loves of Othniel and Achsah,' translated from the Chaldee, (2 vols. 1769,) of which the preface says, that 'the first book was translated by Moses Mendez, the former possessor of the (pretended) Mss.; and that the rest had been pursued amidst the vexations of a very troublesome employment, increased

by disappointments from pretended friendships.' The author was probably a Jew, and" * * * * *

[*The rest of this letter is unfortunately lost.*]

LETTER III.

"Keswick, April 8th, 1830.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I reply thus immediately to your very interesting and indeed affecting letter, that I may endeavour in writing (as, were it possible, I would willingly in person) to assist you in beguiling some little portion of your wearying confinement. The severe pain which you were suffering, indicated, I suppose, a gathering in the part originally affected, from which a discharge, though it leave you greatly exhausted, may, I hope and trust, give permanent relief. There is a *vis vitæ* on which much reliance may be placed, in an unconquerable spirit like yours.

"Lord Buckhurst is beyond all doubt the immediate father in verse of Spenser; he was by far the greatest, and (which is not always, nor even often a necessary result) the most influential poet of his generation. But he is included in 'Warton's History;' and my agreement with Longman is, that I may embody these lives hereafter in my intended continuation of Warton's work, should I live to undertake it seriously.

From very early boyhood, when I first read the

'Arcadia' in Mrs. Stanley's modernization of it, Sydney took possession of my imagination. Not that I liked the book the better just in proportion as she had worsened it,—for his own language would have presented nothing strange or difficult to me, who had read 'Shakspeare' and 'Beaumont and Fletcher,' as soon as I could understand enough of them to follow the story of their plays: but she had thrown away the pastoral parts, and the miserable pieces of metre with which those parts are encumbered, and therefore I had nothing to interrupt my enjoyment of the romance. Spenser afterwards increased my veneration for Sydney; and Penshurst, when I first saw it (in 1791), was the holiest ground I had ever visited.

"Forty years have not abated my love and veneration for Sydney. I do not remember any character more nearly without reproach. His prose is full of poetry; and there are very fine passages among his poems,—distinguishing them from his metres, in which there is scarcely even a redeeming line, thought, or expression.

"I was introduced one day in St. James's Park to the Fielding of whom you give me so lively an anecdote. He was then a fine old man, though visibly shaken by time: he received me in a manner which had much of old courtesy about it, and I looked upon him with great interest for his fa-

ther's sake: this must have been in 1817. The year afterwards, a book was sent me with this title, 'Eternal Punishment proved to be not Suffering, but Privation; and Immortality dependent on Spiritual Regeneration; by a Member of the Church of England.' There came a letter with it, in which the author (James Fontaine), supposing me to be well acquainted with Mr. Fielding, spoke of him as his friend, and as holding the opinions which were maintained in this book. And I heard afterwards from the friend who had introduced me to him, that he was supposed to have fallen into some peculiar religious notions, and that something like enthusiasm was imputed to him,—which, judging from the book, it could only have been by persons who had bestowed no serious thought themselves upon the most serious of all subjects. For Fontaine (though far from an able writer) has upon scriptural grounds, and without any tendency to enthusiasm, endeavoured to establish an opinion in which the heart and understanding might fully acquiesce, as one which would vindicate the ways of God to man. Fielding, therefore, appears to have avoided those errors into which men so frequently fall when they begin earnestly to look beyond this mortal state.

The volume which Mr. Park sent you, and which missed its way, was probably his 'Morning Thoughts and Midnight Musings:' — there are

some very affecting and beautiful pieces in it,—the best he ever wrote.

"I will ask Quillinan to look for the notes upon Davenant. D'Israeli has some curious particulars about Gondibert in his 'Quarrels of Authors:' but he supposes Dr. Donne to have been one of his assailants,—who was dead long before. There is a most atrocious libel upon Wither in one of Davenant's plays; he is introduced in the character of an assassin, and all but named: the intention being plainly denoted by an allusion to his 'Abuses stript and whipt.'

"Wither's family is now inosculated with a branch of mine. My late uncle (Mr. Hill) married a sister of Mr. Bigge Wither of Manidown, and the children of that marriage are now my wards.

You mention Miss Austen; her novels are more true to nature, and have (for my sympathies) passages of finer feeling than any others of this age. She was a person of whom I have heard so well, and think so highly, that I regret not having seen her, nor ever having had an opportunity of testifying to her the respect which I felt for her. I have inquired if any papers of poor George Wither could be traced, but without success.

"There is a portrait of Richardson at Rokeby,—and with this odd story belonging to it, which Mr. Morritt told me when he pointed it out. It had been painted for one of his female admirers; and

when long Sir Thomas Robinson took possession of the house, and of this portrait among others, he wondered what business a Mr. Richardson could have among them, in company with persons of high degree: so the canvass was turned over to the nearest painter, with orders to put on a blue ribband and star, and thereby convert it into a portrait of—Sir Robert Walpole! You may be sure Mr. Morritt, when he restored to the picture its right name, left it in possession of these honours.

"Your young friend is expected with his bride in this immediate neighbourhood. I have seen a little of him formerly, and generally meet one of his brothers during my rare visits to town,—among a knot of able, active, and ambitious men, some of whom are right in their feelings, but all wrong in their opinions, and likely (most of them) to do all that in them lies, for increasing the evils and dangers of this ill-fated country. I do not recollect the Christian name of this brother,—but he is a mild, agreeable man, and of prepossessing countenance.

"The fact which you notice of the likeness to Sir Edward Dering (of Charles's age) in his family at this day, is very curious. Did you ever remark how remarkably old age brings out family likenesses,—which having been kept, as it were, in abeyance while the passions and the business of

the world engrossed the parties, come forth again in age, (as in infancy,) the features settling into their primary characters — before dissolution? I have seen some affecting instances of this,—a brother and sister, than whom no two persons in middle life could have been more unlike in countenance or in character, becoming like as twins at last. I now see my father's lineaments in the looking-glass, where they never used to appear.—But of Sir Edward Dering;—very few of his speeches are given in 'Cobbett's' or 'Howell's Parliamentary History,' the worst part of which is that of those times—and this owing to mere negligence on the part of the editor, who has not resorted to separate publications as he ought to have done, nor to Rushworth, and still less to Nalson. Dering's speeches, with his beautiful portrait, I found in the library at Lowther, where I found also, in the same collection of tracts, a 'Life of Sejanus,' (levelled against Buckingham,) by P. M. Some former owner of the same age had written under these initials *Philip Massinger*. I communicated this to Gifford as deserving inquiry on his part, which he said he would make, but I believe never did.

"Sismondi is less fully informed than I expected to find him, respecting the literature of Spain and Portugal, especially that of the latter country. I have never seen his historical works. Having

no library within reach, I live upon my own stores, which are, however, more ample perhaps than were ever before possessed by one whose whole estate was in his inkstand.

1.

My days among the dead are past;
Around me I behold
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they
With whom I converse day by day.

2.

With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

3.

My thoughts are with the dead; with them
I live in long past years;
Their virtues love; their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears;
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with a humble mind.

4.

My hopes are with the dead; anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Thro' all futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

"The stanzas in the last page were intended for my Colloquies, in which I thought at first of interspersing poems, as Boethius has done: but, giving up that intention, this little piece was left unfinished, and so it remains.

"Mrs. Harriet Bowdler, at the age of seventy-eight, has just died of the small-pox, of the most virulent kind. This I hear to-day from Mrs. Hodson,—formerly Margaret Holford.

"God bless you, Sir Egerton,—and restore you! I shall look anxiously for a letter from you—but with hope.

"Yours, with sincere respect,
"ROBERT SOUTHEY."

LETTER IV.

"Keswick, 16th June, 1830.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your letter—for Oldys's notes concerning Sir W. Davenant, which your son has obligingly transcribed for me; and for some very interesting and valuable books, part the produce of the Lee Priory press, and part the result of your unweariable industry on the Continent. The 'Gnomica' I have been reading with the greatest delight, which has been not a little enhanced by perceiving how frequently my thoughts have been travelling in the same direction with yours: charges of plagiarism indeed have

often been made upon lighter grounds than might be found in this volume of yours, for accusing me of it in my last work. Had I known this a little sooner, it should have been noticed in the second edition of that work.

"Few books have ever fallen in my way which contain so many golden remarks as these 'Gnomica.'

"That portion of the 'Theatrum Poetarum' which you printed at Canterbury, I purchased when it was first published, and was very glad now to receive the whole work with more of your own remarks, and in so beautiful a form.

"Your edition of Sir Philip Sydney's Life I have been fortunate enough to borrow by means of Longman. There is a curious passage respecting it in 'Pepys's Memoirs,' relating to a passage of prophetic foresight concerning the Dutch. This Life, which is every where characteristic of its author, has led some writers astray concerning the age at which Sydney began his travels, owing, I have no doubt, to a mistake of figures in the manuscript, where 17 must have been so written as to be taken for 14.

You may have seen an impossible attempt of Dr. Aikin to comprise a complete collection of English poetry in one volume. He begins with a few pages of Ben Jonson, and then comes Milton. Longman put it into my hands when it was just published; and I remarked to him, that Dr. Aikin had begun just where I should have

ended, for every thing which this volume contained was already accessible to readers of all classes. He remembered this, and applied to me lately to include such books of the earlier poets as the limits would admit, in a similar volume. I could have made a most valuable book if he would have consented to let the volume be supplementary to Chalmers's and Anderson's collections: but this did not suit his views; so I could only reverse the proverb, and cut my cloth according to my coat. I have, however, given the volume a special value by including Hawes's 'Pastime of Pleasure;' and if the publishers could have been persuaded, I would have commenced it with that copy of 'Piers Ploughman,' which is the intermediate one between Whitaker's and the old edition; but he did not think the great service which might thus have been rendered to our literature would be beneficial to his book: and I must think myself fortunate in getting in old Tusser, Lord Brooke, and Chamberlain's 'Pharonnida,' which fell in my way when I was a schoolboy.

"I did not know that any of 'my Cid's' blood was running in English veins; still less could I suppose, when translating the account of those proceedings at the Cortes, where he revenged the wrongs of his two daughters, (which is one of the sublimest passages of its kind,) that it was a part of your family history. No descent can be more

distinctly made out, and none could possibly pass through a more illustrious channel.

"There is a path leading from Keynsham towards Bristol through what was formerly the park. It was very little frequented when I discovered it six-and-thirty years ago, at which time I was in the habit of walking between Bath and Bristol, from one place to the other; and I felt very strongly the picturesque and melancholy character of the scene—melancholy only because its days of grandeur were gone by. A small lodge was the only building which remained; but the grounds, though disparked, had still a parkish appearance in the old hawthorns which were standing here and there, and in their inequalities, making it look as if there ought to have been deer there. It was the only part of the walk in which I habitually and involuntarily slackened my pace.

"I have very recently added your edition of 'Collins's Peerage' to my library, and it makes me regret the more that you should not have executed your intentions of writing biography upon an extensive scale: it can never be well written except by one whose mind is at once comprehensive and scrutinizing, and who unites an antiquary's patience with a poet's feeling. The poem regarding your own life I trust you will finish, and intreat you so to do; but at the same time to

bear in mind that if you have not done all you dreamt of doing, and could have done—this is the common and perhaps the inevitable lot of all who are conscious of their own powers; and that you have done much which posterity will not willingly suffer to pass into oblivion.

"Lucien Buonaparte applied to me to translate his poem: the application was made in a circuitous way by Brougham, and I returned, as was fitting, a courteous answer to what was intended as a flattering proposal; not thinking it necessary to observe that an original poem might be composed at no greater expense of time, and with the certainty of satisfying one person at least, whereas in the translation I was perhaps as likely to displease the author as myself. I read the original when it was printed—which few persons did: one part of it pleased me much; and the whole was better conceived than a Frenchman could have conceived it; but I could not forgive him for writing it in French instead of Italian, nor for adapting it to the meridian of the Vatican. Butler's translation I never saw. He has restored the character of the school at Shrewsbury, which was upon a par with the best in England when Sydney and Fulk Greville were placed there on the same day; and when the boys represented plays in an open amphitheatre formed in an old quarry between the town walls and the Severn. Churchyard describes it.

"The stanzas in the 'Gnomica,' p. 163, might

have passed for a fragment of 'Gondibert;' they have just that tone of thoughtful feeling which distinguishes that poem above all others, and owing to which (faulty as in many respects it is) I never take it up without deriving fresh pleasure from it, and being always unwilling to lay it aside. A little, I think, he learnt from Sir John Davies—more from Lord Brooke, who is the most thoughtful of all poets. Davenant had less strength of mind or morals, (as his conversion to popery proves,) but more feeling: with him the vein ended. You trace a little of it in Dryden's earlier poems; not later. You have admirably characterized the poets of Charles II.'s age, in your preface to the 'Theatrum Poetarum.'

"Do you recollect the portrait of Sydney, prefixed to Dr. Zouch's life of him, from a picture by Velasquez, at Wentworth Castle? It is a good likeness of Professor Airey, the Cambridge mathematician, who was a youthful prodigy in his own science;—but it bears no resemblance whatever either to the miniature which you have had engraved, or to the portrait in the Sydney papers. I am inclined to suspect therefore that it is not his portrait, especially as that want of resemblance leads me very much to doubt whether Sydney ever could have sat to Velasquez. The countenance in the miniature is feebler than I should have looked for, more maidenly: and that again in the Sydney papers has a character (quite as

inappropriate) of middle age, and is not without a certain degree of coarseness.

"The Sydney papers have induced me to judge ess unfavourably than I used to do of Leicester, nd rather to agree with my excellent friend Sharon Turner in thinking his character doubtful, than decidedly bad. The strongest fact against him is what Strada states, that he engaged, through the Spanish Ambassador, to bring about the restoration of the old religion, if Philip would favour him in his hopes of marrying the Queen. Strada affirms this upon the authority of the Ambassador's letters; and I cannot satisfactorily explain it as being only part of a scheme for obtaining the confidence of the Spanish Court, and becoming thereby better acquainted with the schemes of its confederates in England. On the other hand, the character of Sir Henry Sydney seems to me in a certain degree a guarantee for Leicester's intentions. So is Sir Philip's too; and Leicester's friendship for his brother-in-law, and evidently sincere affection for his nephew, tell greatly in his favour. There are also expressions in his will, and touches of feeling, which may surely be considered as sincere indications, not merely of the state of mind in which the will was written, but of the habit of mind. What a most affecting thing is his mother's will! In the reverence which Sydney must have felt for her memory, and in his grateful affection for his uncle, you may I think account—

and perhaps find an excuse—for the manner in which he speaks of his Dudley descent. Even his father taught him to pride himself upon it.

"Farewell, my dear Sir, and believe me,

&c. &c.

"ROBERT SOUTHEY."

LETTER V.

"Keswick, 10th October, 1830.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I was about to write to you, and apologize for a seeming neglect, which began to weigh heavily upon my conscience, when your miscellaneous sheet arrived by this day's post. The characters which you have drawn in it of Romilly, Whitbread, and Lord Liverpool, I am very well able to appreciate, and admire them accordingly. They are beautifully and most discriminately delineated. I did not like Romilly. He was more an antique Roman, or a modern American, than an Englishman in his feelings. One of the very best speeches which I remember was made by Frankland in 1810, in answer to a motion of his for altering some of the criminal laws; and Romilly was disingenuous enough to speak of it with contempt as something unintelligible. Whitbread I liked still less. A hint was once thrown out in the 'Edinburgh Review,' that it would be proper to call me to account for the freedom with which

I had commented upon some of his speeches in defence of Buonaparte: his party took the hint, and it was proposed to bring me before the House of Commons. I was informed of this, and should have been in no want of supporters there; but upon farther consideration they deemed it better to let me alone.

"Lord Liverpool wanted nothing but courage to have been the best and wisest minister of modern times; he was always well-informed, always considerate, and always judicious, when he ventured to act upon his own sense of right. But in compromising a great principle he virtually (not intentionally) betrayed it; and more evils are likely to follow from that compromise than broke loose from Pandora's box.

"The transcript reached me safely, and I am very much obliged to you for it, and to Professor Horner. I would fain send you the 'History of Brazil' (my best work), that you may judge, by the labour already bestowed upon it, how greatly I prize any information which may enable me to render it less imperfect: but three thick quartos are of unseemly bulk for travelling from London to Geneva. I will consign them therefore to Mr. Quillinan's care, that they may be deposited for you at Lee Priory.

"I had noticed that paper in the 'Quarterly Review,' not having the slightest suspicion that it was yours, as containing an unusual portion of

knowledge, and being in a strain of thought and feeling with which I could wholly accord; and I have made a note of reference to it respecting Sir Robert Dudley. Sydney's 'Stella' cannot have been Lady Rich, because his poems plainly relate to a successful passion, and because the name was applied to his widow. Is he the first person who used it as a female name? I incline to think so, because it is evidently used in relation to Astrophel, for which conceit I suppose he fixed upon it, though he must have known that it was a man's name among the Romans. The better to estimate Sydney's deserts, I have been re-perusing 'Euphues,' and such of Green's works as you have printed in the 'Archaica.' The latter I read when you published them; the former, ten years ago, when the book first came into my hands. The most remarkable thing in 'Euphues' is, that it contains some specimens of what Swift calls polite conversation. That sort of vulgarity had undergone little or no change from the days of Queen Elizabeth to those of Queen Anne. It is strange that this book should ever have been popular, and still more so that any one should have 'rendered it into modern English' in 1716. The modernization I should like to see. It contains also something upon a miniature scale of those vapid and fine-drawn conversations which were carried to their farthest point of wearisomeness and absurdity in Madame Scudery's romances; but of this there

are earlier examples both in French and Italian. I do not suppose any thing in 'Euphues' to be original, except the mannerism of its pedantry.

"I hope to be in London at the meeting of parliament. Since the long parliament no meeting has been looked for with so much expectation; nor has expectation ever before worn such a 'cast of fear.' Matters are to be considered—and must be considered—which would require all the strength of the strongest government, and all the wisdom of the wisest; and ours is at present weak—miserably weak—in every sense of the word. There is a likelihood that it may derive support from some of those persons who are beginning to see the danger which threatens all our institutions; but, on the other hand, fear is just as likely to make others desert it; such being one sure consequence of what has usually been the policy of feeble and timid men, and of none more than those who now compose the British Cabinet, — that of yielding one point after another, though with the certainty that every concession will bring on a more unreasonable demand. It seems as if they cared for nothing more than how to smoothe their way for the session. There is a talk of giving representatives to Manchester and other large towns; and indeed there is so little chance of preserving the old system, that those who most regret the impossibility of maintaining it, will be contented and thankful if

they can only avert the mischief which must ensue if the election should every where be placed in the power of the populace. There are more than rumours that some measures are intended against the church property. Men who ought not to feel such fears, still less to utter them, make no scruple of saying that they expect to see the clergy placed upon the same footing as other sects — that is, left to be supported by the voluntary contribution of their respective flocks. This language has more than once been heard from persons in influential stations; and the effect is, that people begin instinctively to reconcile themselves as well as they can to an evil which they are thus led to expect: for, in losing hope, we lose in such cases most of the strength for resistance, and almost all the motive for it. While the Catholic Question was afloat, there was a strong body of feeling and principle in the country, not only ready to have rallied round the Government, but eager to do so. That body the emancipation has broken up: and by removing that question the ministers, instead of obtaining the peace which they paid so dear a price for, find that they have only unmasked more formidable batteries, which could never have been opened while that question occupied the ground in front. The cry of parliamentary reform is raised with the example of the Parisians to encourage the radicals here: Brabant is held forth to the Irish

as an example for dissolving the union; and then will follow the demand for a Catholic church establishment in Ireland; and the troubles which might have been averted by imprisoning three or four agitators a few years ago, will not be settled without the most dangerous war that has ever shaken these kingdoms. Add to this, that infidelity and fanaticism are advancing *pari passu* among the middle and lower orders, and that agrarian principles are sensibly making a progress among those who have nothing to lose.

"Gladly would I abstract myself wholly from such subjects, were it possible, and live in the uninterrupted enjoyment of literary pursuits. But political considerations are now like the winds and waves in a tempest; there is no escape from them —no place where those who are at sea can be at rest, and cease to hear and to feel the storm.

The paper upon Bunyan, in the last 'Quarterly Review,' is by Sir Walter. He has not observed, and I, when I wrote the Life had forgotten, that the 'compleat design of a Pilgrim's Progress' is to be found in Lucian's 'Hermotimus.' Not that Bunyan saw it there—but that the obvious allegory had presented itself to Lucian's mind, as well as to many others. My only article in the number is a short one, upon the 'Negro New Testament:'—as a philological curiosity, that Testament is the most remarkable that has fallen in my way.

"My 'Life of Sydney' lengthens before me,

and I shall not be satisfied with it till I can get at the other collections of 'Hubert Languet's Letters,' besides those which were addressed to Sydney himself. Then, too, I shall better be qualified for forming an opinion whether Languet has been rightly supposed to be the Junius Brutus of that age. At present what I have gathered of his character inclines me to think otherwise. I wish and ought also to read the letters of Mornay-Du-Plessis, which not long ago were published. Montaigne and I differ in this respect, that he liked better to forge his mind than to furnish it; and I am much more disposed to lay in knowledge than to lay it out. Mere inclination now would induce me always to read, and seldom, very seldom, to write. This upon me is the effect of time.

"God bless you, Sir Egerton! I hope this may find you restored.

"Believe me your sincere friend,

"ROBERT SOUTHEY."

I cannot finish this exquisite series more appropriately than by appending the following letter from my poor friend Hayley: it is dated 25th October, 1806:—

"Singula lætus
"Exquiritque auditque virum monumenta priorum.

"May not these words of Virgil form an apposite motto for your interesting 'Censura Litera-

ria?'* If you like it, it is yours. And now allow an old poetical hermit to reprove you tenderly for having paid him a recent compliment at the expense of a higher literary name. Are you aware that I allude to what you said in your last number of two biographers, M. and H. I confess that I am gratified by what you have kindly said on the friendly feelings of the latter; but I am sincerely concerned at the same time, that you have spoken so severely of Mason—first, because it may make you many enemies; and secondly, because I am persuaded that reflection would have led you to find an excuse for that air of coldness which offended you in the biography of Mason. It probably arose from his extreme solicitude not to offend the spirit of his departed friend by what in his lifetime he rejected with peculiar fastidiousness—I mean the exuberance of praise. If you look again at the close of Mason's work, you will find that it has more sensibility than you seem to imagine. Is there not great propriety and tenderness in his quotation from the biographer of Agricola?

"Both Mason and Gray had the infirmity of being too often out of humour with the world. When the former favoured me with a visit at the

* The person addressed was at that time carrying on this work, mainly dedicated to bibliographical notices of old English literature, but interspersed with biography and moral essays. It extended to ten vols. 8vo, and has gone to a second edition.

house of my friend Romney, it grieved me to observe the morbid appearance of his mind concerning censure and praise. He told me that the malignity of public criticism teazed and vexed him; and that public applause gave him little or no pleasure. His countenance confirmed what his discourse discovered, that in the declining period of his life his nervous system was cruelly disordered, and exhibited in a deplorable manner the opposite extremes of apathy and irritation.

"If I differ from you in one point, I agree with you in many; in one perhaps directly against myself—I mean the place that letters may occupy with the happiest effect in a bibliographical compilation. Had I been aware how very copious my collection of my dear Cowper's letters would become, I believe that I should have placed them with it in the manner that time and chance led me to do. My comfort is, that nothing can diminish the charm of his delightful letters.* They show the man in a most endearing point of view, and they have to my feelings peculiar graces that I never found in any other epistolary composition. I agree with you in almost every thing you say of 'Beattie's Life.'" It is a work highly honourable both to the dead and living. I am particularly pleased with your remark on 'Solitude,' and still more with your first of an intended disquisition on

* See a spitefully opposite opinion in Miss Seward's letter.

the poetical character. It is a book that I am convinced you may execute with great felicity of sentiment and expression. Perhaps you may find some passages relating to the subject in a work of Marmontel that you may think worthy of your notice—I mean the 'Poetique Française' in two octavos.

"I will transcribe the sentences from the book before me: 'Dans le poëte, c'est l'opinion et le sentiment qui dominent; mais si l'esprit ne les éclaire, ils s'égarent bientôt l'une et l'autre. L'esprit est l'œil du génie, dont l'imagination et le sentiment sont les ailes. Toutes les qualités de l'esprit ne sont pas essentielles à tous les genres de poësie: il n'y a que la pénétration et la justesse dont aucun d'eux ne peut se passer: l'esprit faux gâte tous les talents; l'esprit superficiel ne tire aucun avantage d'aucun.

"'Mais qu'à l'aspect des merveilles de la nature pleine de reconnoissance et de l'amour, le génie aux ailes de flamme s'élance au sein de la Divinité, qu'ami passionné des hommes, il consacre ses veilles à la noble ambition de les rendre meilleurs et plus heureux que dans l'âme héroique du poëte; l'enthousiasme de la vertu se mêle à celui de la gloire. C'est alors que la poësie est un culte, et que le poëte s'élève au rang des bienfaiteurs de l'humanité.'

"I have copied these sentences not in the order in which they stand in the book, but so I hope

that they may make a pleasing impression on your mind, and animate you to a successful pursuit of your projected and highly promising disquisition. I could wish to say more to you on this and other topics, but a pressure of literary occupations will only allow me to add, that I heartily wish you health and happiness, and that I am,

"My dear Sir, faithfully yours,

"WILLIAM HAYLEY."

CHAPTER XX.

Sudden failure of the author's strength—Ebbs and flows common to the human mind—Mind affected by the body—The author's works already numerous—Unconquerable desire to embody the visions of the mind—A poet must be a poet, do what he will—Southey's "Life of Wesley"—His biographical note of the poet Gilbert—A poet's prose unlike that of other prose-writers—Tender moral truths—Number of verses written by the author on fifty successive nights—Arrogance raises opposition—Imagination—Signs of the times as to literature—Duty of inborn power not to hide its talent—The public will not be dictated to—Self-diffidence destroys power—General truths elicited in the establishment of an individual's pretensions—The author's morbid nature—*Chaleur* of style—Good poetry the organ of our noblest nature—Use of these expositions and reclamations—Essays hitherto written on imagination not satisfactory—Proofs of the rarity of this faculty—It pays little regard to factitious manners—Discomfort from inability to estimate the qualities and conditions of human nature—Our best powers mistaken for weaknesses—Knowledge of mind, not action, necessary—Two men under the same course of events may not therefore be alike, but a mere narrative of facts would convey this impression—We must reason on our opinions and feelings—Fine understandings not required for the common business of life—Inequality and inconsistency of the human intellect—Pleasure of pursuing these nice and evanescent discussions—Night-contemplations.

My strength begins suddenly to fail me. I think that I have a good deal yet to say, but I cannot bring it out. I suspect that the tide of life, which

has hitherto run strongly in my veins, will soon stop at once. The mind has great dominion over the body, but when it loses hope it deserts its domicile; and then it seems to me that the body (at least in old age) will give way in a moment. I feel something of this, which I never felt before. I can scarcely force on my pen; but I do not yet like to believe absolutely in the mind's flight.

I suppose that all minds are subject to this intermission of ebbs and flows,—at least all energetic minds; but external circumstances will produce effects on the body which will extend its derangements to the intellect. What right have I to expect that, as my frame is broken by age, I can preserve my mental vigour? And why do I weary myself with writing more books, when, if I have written well, I have written enough already? and if I have not written well, there is no probability that I shall write well now. But we are the creatures of habit, and we cannot abandon the occupations we have been accustomed to. I have a mind that preys upon itself if it is left unemployed, and which never satisfies itself, because it thinks that much remains to be done. I never look out upon the face of the earth and skies, without having a sense of deep and mysterious impressions, which I feel a longing desire to discriminate and embody in language. This extreme tremulousness to the varied beauties of nature does not subside with age. I take it to be

the inseparable inherent of a poetical mind: I suspect that adventitious circumstances have very little to do with it.

A poet, then, may take his own course, without anxiety as to management and the fortunes and affairs of life: do what he will, he must still be a poet; and what constitutes much of the interest of poetical biography is an exemplification of these principles. A peculiar turn of thought is the mark; but there is something also in a transparent elegance of magical language which comes with it. Happening at this time to have gone through Southey's "Life of Wesley," I have just been struck with this charm when the biographer comes to passages in which he throws in his own words. Let me take a curious note (vol. ii. p. 467.) regarding one I had never elsewhere heard of:—

"A son of Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert, speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua in 1758, published in the year 1796, 'The Hurricane, a Theosophical and Western Eclogue;' and, shortly afterwards, placarded the walls in London with the largest bills that had at that time been seen, announcing 'The Law of Fire.' I knew him well, and look back with a melancholy pleasure to the hours which I have passed in his society when his mind was in ruins. His madness was of the most incomprehensible kind, as may be seen in the notes to 'The Hurricane;' but the poem contains

passages of exquisite beauty. I have among my papers some curious memorials of this interesting man. They who remember him, (as some of my readers will,) will not be displeased at seeing him thus mentioned with the respect and regret which are due to the wreck of a noble mind."

True poets never put words together even in prose like other people. This power is a positive gift, which no art or toil can reach; and he who wastes or neglects it, will be responsible hereafter for his idleness or uselessness. *Nullum quod tangit, non ornat.* In going over what has been a hundred times told by others, he gives it novelty and grace. Of all things, tender moral touches have the most magical charm. When we suddenly light upon a work of genuine genius, we seem as if the gates of a new and enchanted world were opened upon our gaze. He who feels assured that he has this faculty, (and he often has it without feeling assured of it,) must experience within himself complacence and happiness. The malignity and ignorance of the world often suppresses the assurance in them. I had no assurance the greater part of my life, but I begin to persuade myself now that I have some assurance; yet it is only fitful and by gleams. For instance, had I not had something of gift above the common, I could not for fifty successive nights, at the age of sixty-eight, have written two hundred lines of poetry a night,—even supposing them to be

poetry rising little above mediocrity; which, on re-perusal, is not I flatter myself the case: but some of them are now before the world, and they must judge. There is something very mortifying to pass one's life in a struggle to make way in a particular path, and not to believe that one neither does nor can succeed, or advance in it. A feeling of *impuissance* freezes up all the glow of the heart, and creates the weakness which it fears.

Still, when we can persuade ourselves, it does not follow that we can persuade others; and he who is arrogant, generally raises up the rest of the world in arms against him. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*:—it must be a calm and complacent self-confidence; and this can only be attained by looking acutely, incessantly, and impartially, into the principles of what is undertaken to be done.

To execute works of imagination with that power which will entitle them to the stamp of sterling value, may surely be ascertained with a precision that cannot be called in question. Critics and readers may differ about what is good or bad in the arts of composition; but they cannot honestly differ about what is imagination or sentiment, and good imagination or sentiment, and what is not. Yet the "Edinburgh Review," in an article entitled 'Signs of the Times," (June, 1829,) well describes the present age as mechanical in its intellectual and literary aspects; and this is very

much in the way of a true appreciation. Literary fame is very much dependent on the temporary state of mind of the multitude. I can have no doubt that inborn power ought to go on in defiance of this. No one should permit himself to have

> —— that one talent, which is death to hide,
> Lodged with him useless;

as Milton nobly says. Some cheer, however, is necessary, as a flower will not bloom that cannot enjoy the beams of the sun.

How the cheer may be drawn out which the multitude is unwilling to give, is difficult to be discovered. It is rarely that they will allow any one to insist on his own merit; they are arbitrary in their favour, and will not be dictated to: but if the claims are strong, and incontrovertible, and well set out, they will force their way at last. There are also equivocal claims that flash, and strike,—and go out again, and are forgot. In the absence of fame perhaps there is not much; but the doubt of power, which the neglect creates, often destroys the power itself.

No value, perhaps, will be put upon that which has no merit beyond establishing the claims of an individual; but, if in doing that, general truths are elicited, and general sentiments, knowledge, and eloquence brought forth, then what is thus offered to public attention will have its weight.

The work will be consulted as applicable to other cases, and as a fund of original instruction. But works so executed are rare: it seems as if the utmost common authors can do, is to bring forth and apply materials already prepared by others.

I am of a lamentably susceptible and morbid nature, and any thing which disturbs me suspends for a time my powers; and this is the reason why all my compositions are best executed in the middle of the night, when the world is at rest; but, connected with this excess of susceptibility, is that poetical temperament to which any thing which may be good in my writings is attributable. Hence my pen shows itself under the movement of strong impulses; and this sort of *chaleur* of style will not, I trust, be denied to me. This will not supply images to the fancy, but it will give them that effect on the bosom without which imagery is a barren offering to the Muse.

It is commonly held that poetry is but an idle ornament, and no necessary part of the fruits of the mind; but I cannot admit this to be a sound and wise opinion. Good poetry is the source and organ of all that is sublime, beautiful, and passionate, in intellect and the visionary part of our being; and as to those abuses of it which gain favour with the mob, they are no argument against its uses. The false *déesse* cannot annul the charms of the celestial deity whom she dares to counterfeit: her tinsel and unchaste glitter will

be detected by a firm and sagacious eye. Is the simple attraction and blessing of the pure and virtuous beauty to be denied, because the gaudiness of the harlot is corrupt, dangerous, and delusive?

All good poetry breathes the sublime lessons of moral truth: it points out relations between the material and spiritual world which would not otherwise be perceived; and it calls out those slumbering idealisms from the inner recesses of the soul, which, when roused, exalt our nature. Is he to whom the mighty faculty is given, to let the seed perish in its mine?—is he to shrink and be silent before crude, ignorant, and ungenerous criticism?—is he to believe himself ungifted because the mob has no ears to hear him? He can at least sing to the woods and waves, and be content with the echoes of his own voice. His power is in thoughts, not words; and creations cannot be blown away by the frowns or hisses of the vulgar.

Of what use, then, may these expositions or reclamations be? There are reasonable people who, when just principles of judgment are recalled to their attention, will not utterly disregard them,—who may be touched by appeals, and have generous feelings awakened in their bosoms. There are many who are not without fire at bottom, when it wants a good deal of stirring.

No essay which I have ever yet read on poeti-

cal imagination satisfies me. Akenside is too wordy and diffuse, and more rhetorical than poetical. Addison is just and elegant, but somewhat languid. There is something subtle and ingenious in Bonstetten, but I suspect not quite sound and satisfactory: the German imagination is factitious and exaggerated,—often cloudy,—now and then sublime. Too many confine the idea of imagination to the dress of thought: against this I always rebel with all my might. I do not object to a simile or metaphor when it comes naturally, and is beautiful in itself; but it is not worth seeking for, and a stern majestic thought is better without it. An opinion the reverse of this, is that which has spoiled all secondary poetry and misled many a genius. The mass of poetry of every country is made up of it.

I should suppose that this high quality had been much more common but that it is so seldom exhibited in literature. If it were common, it would oftener break out in defiance of bad critics and bad public taste. Whether it is embodied in literary composition or not, it forms the joy of the existence of all those who have bright and feeling minds.

Such flights of the intellect concern themselves but little with factitious manners and the petty customs of temporary fashions. They escape from society into the free and magnificent solitude of Elysian gardens, and gaze upon ideal beauty

and converse with ideal wisdom. To represent the casual manners and characters of the world does not require invention, but observation; and even there, nothing is represented but upon the surface. The craft and cunning of the great mass of those who have had to struggle with society, make them observers rather than inventors, and therefore they prefer these pictures of factitious life.

It is necessary to see all these things in their true lights, and to discriminate the faculties, pursuits, and tastes of the varied classes of mankind. Nothing leads more to discomfort and discontent than not to know how to estimate human fates, conditions, talents, and desires. While in this state of ignorance, we worship what we ought to shun, and shun what we ought to worship.

We mistake our best powers for weaknesses, and pride ourselves on what are follies. One man can only rise above another by mind and virtue, all the rest is worse than nonsense; and mind cannot get the play of its strength but by incessant meditation and leisurable removal from the world.

We should endeavour to pierce the mists that surround us, and learn where we are, and the motives that act upon us. A history of our actions is nothing without this; and therefore a proper biography must be necessarily in many parts metaphysical and spiritual. A poet and a man of

little mind may be thrown into a series of the same outward facts, yet how unlike will they be in the experience of all the essentials of existence! —therefore, how imperfect will be the knowledge conveyed by the mere relation of facts which regard them! This will justify me in the long and frequent intellectual expositions into which I have entered in these memorials, and which many will think tedious.

Not only to state our opinions and feelings, but to reason upon them, aids in the developement of the processes and influences of our interior nature; and what intelligence is so important as this? We have no security for the rectitude of those thoughts which are not reasoned upon; they may be the result of caprice or passion.

It is true that, in the common business of life, understandings of this high and nice reach are not necessary; but when one undertakes authorship, he ought to be qualified for this more difficult work. We must know how he who professes to give an account of his teachership is fitted to teach.

Were good authors regular and formal beings, who because they are wise in some things are uniformly sage, we might not require these disclosures, and these arguings and comments upon them; but they are the reverse, and a highly-gifted mind is often the most inconsistent and strange. Such a mind, therefore, is a subject for

the most anxious and most analytical discussion; and who can look into the minds and hearts of others as he can look into his own?

As long as I am in a state of clearness to pursue these evanescent chaces, the hours glide away with me, and existence is satisfactory, and even delightful to me, in feeble old age, and in the midst of sorrows, privations, indignities, and dangers. Those solemn times of night which others lose in sleep and forgetfulness, are not lost to me; and thus I add to the duration of life beyond others of the same number of years.

CHAPTER XXI.

The author avoids theological subjects—Happiness unequally distributed by Providence—The author peculiarly exposed to attack—Under what circumstances these Memorials may be open to attack—Justifiable or unjustifiable egotism—The sense of superiority will raise one above ordinary troubles—The author's love of reading has declined—His pleasure on reading Southey's "Life of Wesley"—False enthusiasts and fanaticism—This abuse of the faculty has no concern with genuine imagination—Such genuine imagination rare even in poetry—Due employment of this imagination—Not often exhibited by verse-writers—Bad taste of common readers of poetry—Their love of artifice and strong stimulants—Elucidation of important points neglected, and trite topics obtruded—Cold philosophy discourages visionary poetry—Capricious superiority not worth having—Authorship loses its respect when charlatans prevail—If the author's theories can be confuted, let them be—Injudicious demand for mechanical perfection—The merit of an individual is only useful to be set forth, so far as it is an example to others—What Memorials ought to be—They ought to contribute to rectitude of thought and sentiment—Talent ought to leave fruits behind it—Frankness seldom comes till old age—In genius feeling predominates over intellect—Gray's force of sentiment—Gray's timidity, Byron's boldness and recklessness—Psychology of poets—The author blamed for perpetually discussing it—His theories not commonly received—Poetry deemed by the common opinion a work of art and labour—That it is inspiration is not a fantastic idea—The nature of poetical invention—The fashion of the times calls for the enforcement of this exposition—Every age has its peculiar taste and fashion—The influence of Byron and Scott—All desire to be remembered after death—Mind never dies.

I AVOID all theological subjects, which have been out of my line of study; but it does seem to me

that mankind are not born with equal chances of happiness, by disposition and natural gifts; nor as to the degree of kindness, or disfavour, they receive from their fellow-beings. Whatever I do, is received with more than an ordinary degree of opposition, and inclination to find fault with it. No human work can be beyond the reach of cavil: but where there is the smallest pretence of opening for attack, I am quite sure that the opportunity will not be lost to assail these Memorials. But it seems to me that they cannot be attacked with justice, unless some such grounds as the following can be shown for the attack:—

That the facts are not true—that the opinions, reasonings, comments, and sentiments, or some of them, are wrong—that they are falsely or inaccurately applied, even if generally true —that they are unimportant—that they are trite—that they are badly expressed—that they are tedious. But if they are neither untrue, nor unimportant, nor inapplicable to the person to whom they have been applied by me, then I think that I have altogether made out my case.

Are my discriminations of the qualities of the human mind wrong? Is poetical imagination such as I represent it to be? Is it morally beneficial, or trifling and empty? Is it common, or rare? Do I, or do I not, possess it? Unless we can come to certain precise principles and tests, every thing may wander in a sea of endless doubts

and contradictions. What is capricious opinion taken up without reason, and which perhaps is a mere *dictum* of perverse temper, worth?

I contend that the questions I have laid down will fairly determine justifiable or unjustifiable egotism in a literary character. By a strict judgment no book ought to be published which does not convey something new or something forgotten, or give innocent amusement. The great thing is, to break new ground, and to do it with force and skill.

But if one can by these or other proofs assuredly establish the conviction of his own superiority over the common herd of mankind, what does it avail? Will it set him above the sorrows, misfortunes, or frailties of humanity? O no! not a perceptible point. But yet what noble and generous mind would not wish it? That it has joys above common minds is certain; but then it has pains also peculiar to itself. Yet though the highest human genius is weak and dark in many directions, its strength and blaze are often wonderful and magical. When it frankly lets out the flame which it has sedulously nursed, it clearly rises into a loftier order of beings, than those who indulge themselves in huddling up dull faculties in their own fogs.

By some odd change of mind or habit, I have latterly had no zest for reading;—but within a

few days, having gone through Southey's "Life of Wesley," which I have found full of deep instruction, it has filled me with new astonishment as to the intellectual and moral character of man. The irregularities, and absurdities, and clouds, and aberrations of mind—of the human mind, there show themselves to be greater than, in my most gloomy moments, I could have supposed. But, above all, they show in the strongest light the differences between a factitious enthusiasm, and a genuine or poetical enthusiasm. Look at the base earthliness of these false enthusiasts, which always shows itself on the grossness of their metaphorical materialism—never in any thing truly spiritual! Their pretended passion for religion expresses itself in the meanest and most disgusting terms of human desire. I consider this to be a decisive illustration, that a genuine imagination is a positive gift; not the result of any forced and laboured stimulant. Wesley himself was a man of talent and education, and rarely guilty of this loathsome fault.

When, therefore, any argument against the indulgence of imagination is attempted to be drawn from the abuses to which fanaticism leads, the answer is, that a religious fanaticism has nothing to do without a genuine imagination.

Many hold that imagination is but another name for delusion; and do not think it safe to admit

the truth of any thing which they cannot see, and touch, and taste, and hear. But when we imagine, what test have we of the truth of our perceptions? An involuntary conscience, belief, or incredulity! Are not the images of a dream as effective as material realities? and if as effective, how can they be empty? I am not bound to call up all the coarse and stupid objections which the dull part of mankind make to this pure imagination. Beautiful and half-divine as this faculty is, it receives all sorts of slights and depressions, and wrongs from the world; and often sickens and dies under the ill usage: and when it lives, it only lives feebly, and with its energies perverted into wrong directions.

How little of this pure imagination predominates even in the greater part of that poetry of any country which enjoys reputation,—nice, sensitive, and deeply cultured critics and readers must, if severely examined, acknowledge. In compositions of mediocrity, there is not a spark of it. But if this faculty so generally exists in the human soul, how happens it that it so seldom shows itself in its fruits? Because the power of embodying it in language is of the most extreme rarity.

Let us suppose a mind which is

Of imagination all compact,

coming forth in its prime age fresh upon the

world, and viewing all the grandeur and magic of its scenery, and beholding the human kind sporting or otherwise occupying itself on its face in all the variety of character, action, and passion; and then giving up its whole powers and skill to the description of what is most delightful, most moral, most intellectual, and most instructive in these inexhaustible subjects. But it will be said, that the description will embellish the shapes and hues, and assign internal feelings which do not exist. But they do exist,—sometimes under coarse outward appearances,—at least in many; and at any rate to the mental eye of the describer.

I say that of this sort of visionary employment there is much less than might be. We find little of it either in poetry or prose-romance. The fashionable poetry is manufactured after the artificial fashion of the day; and the novels are blundering pictures of the temporary manners, which are themselves piquant only by the force of absurdity and folly. But nature is insipid to vulgar minds, which require the false stimulant of corrupt art.

By skill in this art will common critics decide the merit of an author. Yet it is an unworthy, and not a rich-talented art. Almost all this class of books are trash, which soon comes to waste paper. A pure genius keeps aloof without any

probable hope of popularity. On all the public topics, which ought to interest mankind, there are innumerable points which want elucidation. But they are neglected, while what is trite or erroneous continues to be obtruded on the world. There can be no doubt of this fact, whatever may be the cause. I have often thought of drawing a character in this way,—not such as I am, but such as I might be; and have not yet abandoned the task, even in this my feeble old age.

Numberless are the ideal characters of sublimity or beauty which remain to be embodied. A hundred such are necessarily floating dimly in the air before me. But between seeing those images, and clothing them in language, there is a wide interval. The very attempt to arrest them has often the same effect as the attempt to recollect a dream: it puts them at once to flight. We must gaze upon them in a state of perfect abstraction; the act of taking the pen recalls us to earth, and dispels the charm.

There is a cold sort of philosophy which deems it unwise to encourage these visions; but they form all the sunshine of our better life: and he who is most conversant with them, and has the most dominion over them, is the noblest intellectualist. It cannot be denied that he lives among spirits, and talks to a higher order of beings. But there is little of this in common

poetry, and still less in common tales of prose-fiction.

If any author can justly claim to himself the character of such faculties so exercised, he is entitled to great distinction. He then proves himself to be a creature of endowments which need not fear rivalship; and has a fixed place of superiority, which keeps the spirits calm and content against cavil, criticism, and detraction. That superiority which is capricious, and liable every day to be thrown down, gives more pain than satisfaction. But one age is more just to genius than another, and it is necessary perpetually to recall the public mind to proper tests. There are certain landmarks, which, when pointed out to the people's notice, cannot be disputed.

When it is found that authors of mean qualities of mind acquire literary reputation, authorship loses the respect due to it. Authors in the higher departments ought to be those to whom nature has, by general admission, given peculiar endowments. The public cannot bear to be taught by those in whom they discover no superiority. Books are written and published by very foolish and ignorant persons;—but what sort of books? Did a foolish or ignorant person ever write a good book?

In laying down the principles I have expressed, and making the distinctions I have made, I ex-

pose myself to those who are most capable of examining and deciding their accuracy or mistake. If they can be confuted, let them be: I desire only the truth. But if they cannot be, then I know the ground upon which I stand. Some say that what is not written with all the care of art, and mechanism, and pruning, and condensation, and correction, and polish, and with long deliberation, cannot be good! If this be just, then my theory of excellence is wrong. I say that excellence depends on native strength,—on originality, freshness, and first impressions; and that every touch of the file, or pruning-knife, does harm.

As far as we can satisfy ourselves about the theory of mind, it is the most desirable of all knowledge. It is a very subtle and mystical subject; and few have the patience and depth of thought to fathom it:—yet there are certain truths which, when once hit upon, have that sort of reasonableness that they prove themselves. I am willing to suppose that this is the case with some of the propositions on which I have insisted. It is of all things the most provoking, to be at the mercy of whimsical judgments.

Whatever is settled upon general principles, is, of course, an elucidation which is of general utility, and not confined to the case of the individual whose character called it forth. With what merely

applies to an individual the public cannot be expected to take much concern. In that case the individual is of no value but as an illustration. But such books, if executed with sagacious profundity, will in after-times be resorted to as lamps, for they will put forth an enduring light. No biography is of permanent interest, which does not contain moral, intellectual, and axiomatic wisdom. This is the value of "Johnson's Lives of the Poets;" most of his facts were already well known.

But does this present work of mine answer to its title? Of what does it contain memorials?—of private opinions, and sentiments, and also of many public characters, and public topics of my own time. I am more than ever convinced that all individual happiness depends on rectitude of thought and feeling. Whoever therefore contributes in any considerable degree to this rectification is a mighty benefactor to his fellow-beings. No one can effect this by copying the reasonings or conclusions of others, or writing merely what he supposes to be plausible. He must write from the sincerest inward conviction; and that conviction must spring from a mind naturally strong, pure, and rational; and improved and mellowed by culture and experience.

If there be such a mind, can it justify carrying

its fruits to the grave with it? Indeed, it so happens, that they who feel themselves mentally rich, generally seek an outlet: the fire commonly struggles to burst forth, and to get air. When it does not, it almost always consumes itself. But the degree of frankness with which such authors write, varies very much. They seldom attain it without any reserve, till age and practice have rendered them calm and confident. In the beginning there is formality and fear, and probably much mixture of vanity and flourish. The stupid grow more stupid in old age, but the brilliant grow wise and mellow. Let me talk with those who have known misfortune, and had their presumptions softened by disappointment. With those who have much mind, vanity and disguise are commonly cured by years, and the heart begins to talk. To my taste the strongest intellect will not avail without the aid of sentiment.

I believe no instance is known of any great poetical genius, whose character has been undisguisedly handed down to posterity, of whom the feelings have not predominated over the intellect. Sufficient reasons might be given for this: the nerves of the brain, and the chords of the heart, are distinct; and the former may be strong, yet the latter dull: but there can be no poetry without a union of activity in both.

Gray's understanding might have presented to

him conclusions, from the effects of human passions directing human conduct; but how would this have raised sympathy, unless his heart had inspired an eloquence of plaintive reflections, which calls up the most powerful emotions of the soul? Of all Gray's high endowments, the profoundness of his moral sensibility was the most striking.

Gray's sense of responsibility made him timid. Byron was daring and reckless: his venturous spirit enabled him to come to vigorous conclusions whence Gray's more conscientious mind shrunk: but he had not Gray's considerate, tender, accurate, and philosophical wisdom; nor was his knowledge as refined, deeply-examined, and certain. He had not Gray's classical erudition, nor exquisite taste: but he had more invention, and more unstudied and volcanic fire.

Having these opinions of the nature of the poetical mind, I should have entirely departed from my views of the duty of an autobiographer, if I had not dwelt upon the topics which I have endeavoured to expound. The task is not an easy one; and, I am afraid, may not be found as amusing as I would wish it to be. Of all others, the psychology of poets is most changeable, and most difficult to be traced. As they see what others do not see, they often seem moody and irrational,

when they have good cause for their emotions. I cannot expect that the reader will agree with me in all my thoughts, reasonings, and impressions,—but I warn him that I have said nothing ambitiously or insincerely, and nothing on which I have not meditated for years and in all humours.

Many have wondered, that, in all my adversities and all my changes, I could still cultivate this pursuit, which to them appeared light and unimportant; but, if my theory be right, it is the deepest and most important of all intellectual employments. With me it is a part of nature, and of the very essence of my inborn conformation. It is inwoven with every fibre, and with every mental recollection, even from my earliest childhood.

If these principles of poetry were generally entertained and acted upon, it would be superfluous to expound them so anxiously; but it must be obvious to every intelligent reader of popular criticisms that they are not so. Poetry is considered as a work mainly of art and labour; in which factitious ornament, point, polish, and harmony, are deemed the highest excellence. Little attention is paid to that spirit of life, which depends on natural force of thought or sentiment; and which is destroyed by the slow toil of artificial language.

The character of inspiration which poets claim, is not fantastic and baseless: it is a fire of nature which comes from within, and cannot be lighted by any external effort. That cold matter-of-fact philosophy, which attempts to deny this, damps its energies; and a blind view of the magical powers of the mind often suppresses genius in the bud. There is a mean scepticism, which is to the mind like the destructive vapours of a marshy country to the bodily health. In political economy there is an outcry for free trade: in literature no criticism ought to control a free mind.

Do not let any one mistake the nature of poetical invention;—it does not lie in creating extravagant monsters to be wondered at. The images created must follow the model of Truth, and must exemplify her in her most grand and beautiful forms. Such images will visit all rich poetical minds, unsought. The invention may be in the embodiment of material representations or spiritual representations, or a union of both:—but they must not be copied from positive cases of individual reality.

I am entitled to assert that the character of the times calls forth these notices. There has been an endeavour to excite public attention by glare and surprise; and when the popular appetite is provoked in this way, it will not bear natural

food. No one can properly speak of himself as an author, without reference to the age in which he lives. In every age some peculiar tastes are fashionable,—and these create his facilities or his discouragements. If he has a genius properly original, he will be little influenced by it, but will go his own way.

Byron and Scott, each in his own department, led the public taste. It will always be led, though it affects to lead. Some master-spirit gives it the tone, and then it follows blindly: but unless some accidental circumstances concur, no genius can in the first instance command it. When once it has surrendered itself, it no longer exercises any discretion or self-opinion. What one praises another will praise; and so the reverse. Novelty cannot live long from its own nature, for every day it consumes a part of itself. What is profound, and accordant to the enduring consciousness of our heads and hearts, never loses its interest. Almost every one has his moments of soberness and reflection, when he embraces truth with fondness, and folds it to his bosom.

In whom does not the desire to be remembered after death burn unquenchably? Can we doubt, therefore, that the flame is implanted in us for good purposes? Yet of how few will this desire be fulfilled, when we are in our graves!

Even they who were great in their lives, are soon forgotten, except favourite and deserving authors. Statesmen, and politicians, and orators survive the tomb scarcely more than a few flitting months.

Why is this immortality allotted to authors?—Because Mind never dies; because it is not made of corruptible matter which moulders into dust, and then is divided into barren atoms!

CHAPTER XXII.

The last twenty-eight months of the author's residence in England —His dejection and disgust—His letters in the public journals on the Corn Question — His opinion on the Currency Question, and on Peel's Act of 1819—His letters in the "New Times" in November, 1829—His earnest endeavours to amend the Poor Laws and the Copyright Act—He is not fitted for common business—He is too irritable — Deficient in the practice of public speaking—The *clique* of a country neighbourhood—Their exclusiveness—Use of a resident gentry—Wesley's opinion of the torpid intellects of farmers —To enjoy nature requires a cultivated mind—Evils to country squires who do not emerge from home — Praise of the Protestant clergy of the established church — How far the life of a country gentleman, of a literary turn, may be happy—The tumults of the author's life — Seclusion proper for those who are irritable — The delight of society is to mortify each other — Virtue of clearing away delusions and false colours — Moral instruction the most important of all knowledge—Biography, poetry, novels—How far the fashionable novels are pernicious — How far poetry departs from its true purposes — Splendid diction and studied harmony of metre not its first merit — Nature not gaudy, but simple and chaste — Our ideal associations require to be embodied — Style and metre are but childish incidents—They make no inward impression—Books which convey no ideas—Many think obscurity excellence—Genius walks forth arrayed in light — The obscure poet a bungling magician — False teachers — What is dark is always narrow — Few books give new ideas—What might be done by a great genius who should take the right path from youth—Genius must not copy from experience, but invent — Character of our present poetry and romance — Prose romance might be written with the spirit of poetry—A prose epic.

I CANNOT look back upon the last twenty-eight months I spent in England, without dejection and

disgust. For a little while I endeavoured to defend the agricultural interests, and was cheered by them. I wrote several letters in the provincial journals on the Corn Question, which were well received. Their dates were principally between June and October, 1826. All that I then anticipated has since been fulfilled; and the disastrous effects of Peel's Currency Act of 1819 have now been very generally acknowledged. My slender volume on "Population and Riches," printed at Geneva, and published about August, 1819, contained arguments to the same effect; and a series of letters in the "New Times," in November and December, 1829, pushed the same doctrines still more strenuously.

These show that, however fond I am of poetry, and the glories of the visionary world, my mind is not incapable of mixing occasionally with the business of life. The subjects treated on those occasions may appear to have been temporary; but in what I then wrote I persuade myself that something will be found of permanent interest and general truth, and not merely ephemeral. But, as it is long since I have had an opportunity of casting my eyes on those productions, I may be mistaken. I was informed that the letters in the "New Times" were well received by the public. I was then at Geneva.

The great pains I took upon the Poor Laws when I was in parliament, and the pamphlets I

published on the subject of the Poor Laws,* made some impression. Nor was I less earnest and active in the trouble I took about the Copy-right Act,—however unsuccessfully.†

I do not put these things forth as pretensions of any great importance. I am conscious that, if I have any faculties, they lie in a different path. I have not the patience, temper, or craft, for common business. I can argue an abstract question of law upon principle; but in the artifices of applying it I am wanting. Yet had my lot thrown me into the most constant trammels of business, I should gradually have become more calm and adroit. I may say the same of public speaking: I did not speak often enough to acquire self-possession. I had not the courage to begin. When once I could rise and catch the Speaker's eye, I could go on. For this reason I only spoke when I had a motion to make; for then my name stood on the list, and the Speaker himself called on me in my turn.

I know nothing so cheerless as the *clique* of a country neighbourhood, made up of men who have nothing of a public character, or public experience, or public ambition about them. They are full of the most petty intrigues and cabals, more

* See "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates," 1814 to 1818, and the useful index.

† See "Quarterly Review" about 1819, and see Valpy's "Pamphleteer."

busy and deep-laid than the most intriguing politician expends on state affairs, and, at the same time, of the most incredibly ignorant and blind self-conceit. In a little circle this compact conspiracy has its success; and then they have their watchwords, and their jokes, and their slang, only known to themselves; and at public meetings they come up in close phalanx, and never suffer their ranks to be broken. They are like a herd of deer, who come up in a body to stare at a stranger, who enters their haunts, to put him at defiance, as if he had committed treason upon their sacred ground. This accidentally takes place in some neighbourhoods more than others, in consequence of the prevailing characters at the moment of those who take the lead. In some neighbourhoods one or two public characters, who have the chief influence are found; and then the case is different.

I would have the ancient gentry live upon their estates, because I think that they are of great use to the agricultural population; but I see no reason why they should not have some enlarged culture of intellect, and emerge a little into the world occasionally. If the quiet of the country is used only to nurse a stagnation of the finer qualities of the mind and heart, then wo be to that quiet! Rather let them run "into the full tide of life at Charing Cross," as Johnson said of that noisy centricality. I was struck with an extraordinary declaration of Wesley, as recorded

in Southey's life of that singular man. He said that he could make least of the agriculturists—they were a torpid set of people, whom he could never move. I am sorry to say that this applies equally to the stationary gentry.

This is a topic which it is necessary to discuss a little; for it is contrary to all that poets talk of the delights of rural scenery and rural occupations. It is too true that the tillers of the soil do not show much sensibility to the beauties of nature. Their minds are too often in a dull and stagnant state; far more so than those of manufacturers who live in towns amid "the busy hum of men." I cannot account for it, unless it be caused by the want of the collision of conversation. But then it will be asked how do the minds of poets and sages work in the solitude of woods and fields? Perhaps nature's scenery will only stir intellects already prepared by education. But whatever be the reason, the fact cannot be denied.

I am afraid that the same observations apply in some degree to that class of country squires of the secondary order, who seldom enterge from home; and one would suppose that for the same reason it would apply to the resident clergy. But really I do not think that it does so. The Protestant clergy of the established church are, in defiance of all calumnies, altogether an excellent body. Whoever expects that perfection which is not in human nature, will only bring about

hypocrisy; and of all fanaticisms, religious fanaticism is the worst. The position of our regular clergy is a very desirable one. They may be happy and respectable if they will. If they have a turn for literature, they may, in this position, cultivate it to great advantage; and their incomes are commonly not inadequate to their wants if they will lay aside that vanity and love of ostentation, and all those little passions accompanying them, which their duty, and the daily precepts they are called on to inculcate, will greatly assist them in eradicating.

But an old manor-house on a healthy soil, a competent income, a respectable ancestry, and a good education, ought to make the lot of a country gentleman, of generous disposition and fair talents, a heaven upon earth. Alas, for the discontent of humanity, how rarely is it found so! The chief temptations which lead it astray are ambition and vanity; these are the destructive syrens which turn the blessing of independence into its most mortifying reverse.

Under the circumstances which befell me, ambition was natural; but it has been nothing but a curse to me. Had I cultivated my mind in retirement, never allowing myself to stray beyond it, and relying solely on the pursuit of literary fame, I should have been happy. The acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, and the communication of them, is uninterrupted joy to a

tranquil and virtuous spirit. But, for nearly fifty years, not one day of ease have I in my tumultuous career experienced.

I know not how I have been drawn into this vortex, for the love of retirement was a passion with me from childhood. Suppose we have an irritability of temper which will not bear a want of distinction in society, then we need only keep ourselves in seclusion. The great strife in society is, how most effectually persons can mortify each other. In solitude we keep out of the way of this wicked battle of mortification. Were I to pass my life over again, I would never be drawn from the tranquillity of a rural loneliness.

If wisdom is any thing but a name, if literature is any thing better than fine words, these opinions and sentiments are not unimportant to be impressed on mankind. If we clear away the delusions and false colours which evil passions generate, we are extensive benefactors.

In whatever form moral instruction is conveyed, it will always be the most important of all knowledge. It may be conveyed in poetry, in prose romances, in biography, or in essays. No poetry is good which has not a large infusion of morality; and prose fictions, which are not exemplifications of moral truth, are detestable. Novels, which represent light temporary manners, may, if well done, be endured; but, by laying too great stress upon them, they often do much mischief. Female

authors almost always deal too much in them. They are more observant of them than men, and see the surface of character better. They are more awake to little artificial passions, and detect with more liveliness their operations in society. But these temporary manners are very frivolous and fatiguing to strong and profound minds. They encourage the weight given to those foolish distinctions of society, of which the force and sting ought, as much as possible, to be eradicated.

They cherish a feebleness of intellect, and false views of life, which it is the proper business of books to correct and cure; and they alienate the taste from proper food. Whoever accustom themselves to such reading cannot endure sound literature, and thus they operate to the discouragement of genius and learning.

As to poetry, it is strange that it is made much less the oracle of moral wisdom than it might be. If the natural course of the muse is followed, these moral lessons necessarily result from it; for the muse delights in inventing stories which embody truth, and represent virtuous and dignified life in its proper colours. The praise of exalted thoughts and noble actions is its province; and these will support themselves without the tricks of language and the glitter of wit Nor is it necessary to stimulate attention by unnatural and outrageous imaginations. Lofty truth will always fill the mind, and continue to excite its admira-

tion without abatement. We have a conscience within us, which, when it is touched and satisfied, produces instantly a luxurious tranquillity. The words are nothing; the matter is all.

But there is a prevalent opinion among the multitude, including common critics, that poetry is nothing but a piece of polished artifice and trickery; and that all the merit lies in the ornament of splendid diction, and the studied harmony of metre. Or, if some thought be required to be couched under this covering, it consists of unexpected points and piquancies, which, when closely examined, turn out to be false.

Nature never dresses herself in these gaudy colours: she is simple and chaste. We need not force our imaginations into golden gardens, with rivers running over beds of jewels and pearls. Nor do we want oriental decoration and thrones of artificial brightness, whose dazzle the eye is not strong enough to gaze upon. We want only things as they are, in their fairest, best, and most affecting shapes and tints. We want to have the ideal associations, which come mistily upon us, rendered more distinct and impressive. We want to have the slumbering inscriptions of the soul wakened and made legible. Whatever does this, gives us the charm and the use of poetry. Without this, the subordinate incidents to this art, the style which looks rich to the eye, the choice of words which sounds pleasingly to

the ear, are but empty and misleading childishnesses. For me they *ennui* me more than any thing else, and are the most tiresome of all reading.

So far from raising any correspondent movement in the mind, they make no inward impression at all. They play confusedly upon the surface, and, after a little stir, it becomes blank. A ready sympathy follows a native and unsophisticated invention. Whenever the sense predominates over the expression, it comes out as the exhalations of sweetness come out from the dewy earth. There are books which I read, and read without receiving any ideas; and at last lay down with a loathing. What is not intelligible at first, is not worth the trouble of labouring to understand. He who thinks darkly may as well not think at all.

But there are readers who think what is easy cannot be good; like an ignorant audience of a sermon from a pulpit, who believe it to be fine in proportion as it is above their comprehension. They search for something far-fetched as a proof of genius; and therefore delight in the obscure. But in nothing does genius show itself more than in its transparency of brilliances. Secondary authors are commonly heavy and turbid. It seems a full stream, because it is too thick to let us see the bottom; but it may be shallow with a muddy channel, which throws up its own disguise.

Genius walks forth arrayed in light, and throws forth its beams on every side. From whatever it touches, it drives away the shadows of obscurity. But its prime faculty lies in piercing and exposing the secret movements of the human heart: thus it knows best how to awaken sympathy, and to what points to direct its rays. It lives itself under the sunny blaze of truth; and therefore has within a guide how to pursue the mazes of wisdom, and to trace those mystical characters of the human soul, which, when its lamp is cast upon them, start out into visible signs. This is the spell which the muse inspires, and which, when it breathes, makes the blood glow and the spirits dance.

But if the muse does not give the light, if the thoughts must be laboured, and the associations far-fetched, or if the muse only shines dimly through clouds, then either truth will be missed, or it will be seen so imperfectly as to fail of its effect. The poet so labouring will be but a bungling magician, and had better forego his pretensions to represent the oracle. He will bring disrepute upon the occupation, and will misguide instead of enlightening.

These false teachers do infinite harm. They raise a thousand doubts, and perplex our paths, which would otherwise be clear: and, while their own authority is justly disputed, they cause the authority of the genuine oracles to be also disre-

garded. The love of real wisdom is as cheerful as it is finally productive of comfort, content, and happiness. There is nothing of mysterious doubt in it, or of prospects covered with clouds and uncertainties; it is beneficent, universal, and adapted to all the best of the native energies and delights of which our human state is capable.

What is dark is always narrow; what is obscure is always mortifying. Simplicity and clearness therefore, and freedom from laboured artifice, are absolutely indispensable ingredients of true genius; which, in its inventions, will never attempt to vary from the principles of nature and probability. It will pursue the traces of nature's ways, and never by forced excursions deviate into paths of its own from the silly desire to surprise, and ambition to be original. He who speaks after nature only, will always be original, racy, and vigorous.

The great mass of books multiply trite or tumid words; but give few ideas. Where they are plain, they tell us nothing but common-place; — where they are difficult, they probably do not understand even themselves; and if they do understand, the chances are that they are wrong.

Were a great literary genius to set out early in life without fear, and listen only to the voice of nature, what mighty things he might do! But every one is in youth shackled by the technical tyranny of those who have taken on themselves to

dictate in the literary world. He is frightened into the belief that he must by art arrive at some excellence different from nature; and for that he is much less qualified than an inferior mind. He does not trust to nature's first impulses, and seeks something more recondite than her lessons. Thus he becomes stiff and formal; and so disgusts himself and gets dispirited, and often gives up the pursuit in despair. He finds the charlatan beat him; and hates that which he sees arrogant pretenders win.

O what a glorious career he thus abandons! A mighty world of inexhaustible wealth, and grandeur, and beauty, and magic, is before him. He has but to take his pencil and his colour, and with free hand dash it out upon the canvass; then to look into his own bosom, follow its emotions, and comment upon it with the eloquence and passion which those emotions prompt. He cannot then be wrong: what is written on his own heart is written on the hearts of millions of others. Then will his love last as long as the language lasts; because truth, and the feelings of nature, are always the same.

But if he is to copy from experience, it will be said that his subjects will probably be very limited. It is not his business to copy from experience;—it is his business to exemplify by imagined illustrations: he cannot see into the head and heart of an existing individual; but he can

invent a character, and then he will be the master of all its most secret movements. But the proof of his skill and genius will depend on his faithfulness to nature.

If these are erroneous expositions of the genius of poetry and romance, and of its purposes and uses, it is fit that they should be confuted; for nothing is more important than to know with precision the true character and ingredients of this power. A part of our present poetry, not inconsiderable, depends upon it; and I cannot refrain from saying, that very great mistakes prevail regarding it. Many of those works, which have been received with much favour, do not at all deserve it. The great portion of the characters are neither natural, nor moral, nor brilliant, nor have any of those traits to recommend them which could make some amends for their faults or their improbabilities. There is a fondness for plot and surprise, which is never in the best taste; and they scarcely ever describe with any thing approaching to exactness the manners of the class they affect to pourtray. Characters which have no great qualities, can only be endured when they are represented with the most strict fidelity, and when the exposition of them tends to the contempt of their follies, and the correction of their absurdities. In such a case keen and happy ridicule is a moral weapon which may be beneficially applied. But ridicule must not be

too often indulged: it hardens the heart, and scarce ever keeps within the bounds of truth. A jester, when he cannot find an absurdity or folly, will almost always make one.

I know not why prose romances should not be written with the ingredients, and in the spirit of grave poetry. I know not that either rhyme, or even blank metre, mends them; and I am sure that it is not necessary. In rhyme there are many unnecessary difficulties, which do harm rather than good. Rhyme would have ruined the "Paradise Lost" or "Paradise Regained," which last I deliberately assert to be scarcely inferior to the other; and certainly they are the two finest poems in the world.

A prose epic, written with sublimity and force, would, in my opinion, be a most magnificent composition. It might be written with a freedom and variety which even the loosest metre does not allow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Popular authors—Can want of popularity shake an author's self-esteem?—The public read to be amused, not instructed—Frivolity of popular books—Long before Johnson was popular—Why does strong matter in books fail in making its way—Strong oratory succeeds—Vendibility of books—Caleb Williams—The mob like best what they comprehend easiest—If genius does not go its own way it will be useless—Byron, Dryden, Pope, Shelley—Mediocrity—Necessity of literary genius to rectify the public mind—Authors seek by-paths—Interesting subjects neglected—Reign of Queen Elizabeth—A series of new works suggested—The author's failure of memory—Compilation—Want of self-confidence—Meditation and reflection—What history and biography ought to be—Memoirs of King James's peers—A new species of imaginative work—Musing and dreaming—Decay of the author's love of books—Novel of Sir Ralph Willoughby—Sir Walter Raleigh and Lady Arabella Stuart—The author's bibliographical works—Compilation makes the mind lazy—Narrow criticism to demand the same powers and pursuits from all—Imagination ought to be encouraged—"Mirror for Magistrates"—A bookworm—What are the characteristics of an author of a high class—We know the traits of an author's own mind by the materials of which he makes choice—Habit of destroying spells proves meanness of mind—The colour of observations on men and manners betrays the author's own character—Commentators—Characters of the Commentators on Shakspeare—Lord Orford's attention to pettitesses in his characters of great men—His remark upon Gray.

"POPULAR Authors!"—What mean these words? I have them perpetually dinned into my ears. I

am not a popular author : I never was, and cannot be. I cannot obey the whistlings of the wind : I must have my own opinions, and speak them freely. I am neither an ultra-democrat, nor an ultra-aristocrat. I write for no party.* I utter my own individual thoughts and convictions. Is an author to be shaken in his own self-esteem by not being popular? It may call upon him severely to examine himself. Cannot he make such an examination with clearness, sagacity, and impartiality? If he distinctly knows the different faculties of the human mind, and the different purposes of literature, he can.

But the public read to be amused, and to have their passions and prejudices flattered—not to be instructed ; and if they suspect an author of individual views, or disinclined to humour them, they turn away from him. If he writes for money, he is at their mercy ; if not, he should sternly rely upon himself. Then, if truth be with him, the time will come when his labours will find their value.

What are so frivolous, and insufferably foolish, as many of the popular books? They are not only trite and vulgar, but misrepresent every thing both of principles and manners. They have not one of the requisites of good writing, which Johnson justly demands ; they have "neither force,

* See the article entitled "Signs of the Times," in "Edinburgh Review," already cited.

nature, nor novelty." Johnson himself, though popular at last, was long before he became a favourite with the public. His "Ramblers" were at first very coldly received. It does seem to me that power of might, rightly exerted, must succeed at last. Strength of thought, and happiness of exposition or illustration, seldom fail to strike. We should look to the discovery of truth where a veil is thrown over her, and bring her forth into broad light.

It will be said therefore that there must be something wrong or weak in that by which the public attention is not roused. I cannot quite satisfy my mind with any perfect answer to this. We know that in oratory the ablest speeches impress themselves most even upon the populace, if well delivered. Perhaps, therefore, there may be some defect in that which we complain does not please when it ought to please:—something may be thrown in which affronts or mortifies the popular feeling. But Milton assuredly, with all his magnificence and splendour, was never popular in his own day. So it is that authors may enjoy a high reputation, and yet not be popular; that is, their works may not be in great demand in the sale-market.* But publishers of course

* Godwin's "Caleb Williams"—for which see "Edinburgh Review," under "Cloudesley"—did not, I think, come to a second edition till after many years: nor the "Essays of the Aikins," though so much praised, &c.

know no popularity, and therefore no merit but in vendibility. If vendibility is to be the proof of genius, talent, and learning, we must reverse the whole scale of fame in authorship, and put the bottom at the top.

The mob like what is nearest to the reach and habit of their own intellect, and most concordant with their own sympathies. How can they like an atmosphere more rarified than is suitable to their temperament?

But do not let him, who is conscious of lofty genius, be slackened either by neglect or attack. If he goes his own way, he must prepare for one or the other—and if he does not go his own way, his genius will be useless, for it will never display itself. The smallest attempt to compromise destroys the whole spell. Let no one fear the consequences of unjust criticism or censure. He will survive them unweakened, and finally uninjured. Byron blew away the most vehement and virulent reproaches as the wind scatters foul vapours. Dryden and Pope were both bitterly assailed. With what contempt was Shelley treated in his life—how is he now praised—and even over-praised!

But mediocrity will not support this: it must be positive pre-eminence of strength, and that strength put forth to the best advantage. The first business of intellect is to teach mankind those duties which lead to happiness. Poetry is but a

part of the philosophy of religion and morality. There should be constant meditation, and digestion of our thoughts, and pains exerted to find appropriate language for them. We should seek for wisdom with our whole hearts, and never allow ourselves to disguise it.

If our writings contain important lessons which raise the understanding, and touch the best feelings of readers, will they not force their way into regard, and surmount obloquy, insult, and detraction? Society tends so strongly to evil, that mankind are always stirring up dust and clouds to blind the eyes of each other. It is the business of the brilliant and useful author to clear away these blinding influences from the sight of the multitude. But writers are too apt to seek petty ambitions, and to run into idle paths. They neglect the grand and straight road for delusive prospects and barren flowers. They fear that all is explored in the open route, and stray into crooked by-ways and tangled mazes. Thus they are often lost and forgotten, and deserve to be. In the direct road there is more than enough to be done; and every day throws up some new obstacles to be removed.

Authors deal either in tawdriness, or point, or surprise, or worthless subtleties, imperfectly cleared up. I do not speak of voyages, or travels, or professional books, or those other works which undertake to give mere temporary informa-

tion, without pretending to the merits of what is properly Literature. I do not blame others only in neglecting so many interesting subjects which invite them. I equally blame myself. For instance, I think that the amusing parts of history and biography have been sadly overlooked. There is no popular history of the deeply interesting reign of Queen Elizabeth, which satisfies me. I shall be reminded of Miss Aikin's work—it wants liveliness, imagination, sentiment, and force. Perhaps almost all in the way of research that can be done has been done. We do not therefore want that sort of work.

I see an opening for a series of works in a new department, which might perhaps be more instructive than pure fiction, yet not less animated and interesting. It is too late for me to hope to do much, if any thing, in this way—I have no time before me. I may possibly endeavour to set the example. But, O, how much of what I once knew familiarly I have forgot! All the memoirs of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and of every one of the Stuarts, I once knew with accuracy and readiness, and all the characters and connexions of those individuals who made a figure in them.* When I did know these things so minutely, I did not make the use of them I might have done, and should do

* See my "Memoirs of the Peers of King James I." I have urned by accident to it, and feel a sting at heart to perceive how much of it is as if it had never been known to me.

now. I was content with the compilation of the facts, and built little superstructure of my own upon them. This was a great defect. I ought to have enriched them by reflections, sentiments, pointed remarks, and profuse commentaries. I do not think that I was wanting in the power; but I am bound to confess my weaknesses. I was partly overloaded and fatigued with the quantity of matter, and I partly wanted the proper courage.

Courage is absolutely necessary to an original mind, and commonly accompanies it, but not always. I am sure that timidity and want of self-confidence have been the bane of my life. Many will smile at this, who observe me now write with such entire freedom. But this comes from age, long experience, long struggles, numerous insults, which have roused my indignation, and stirred up the spirit which lay deep at the bottom of my heart—and, above all, perhaps, by the benevolent cheers of a few eminent friends.

Meditation and reflection are my delight: my neglect therefore to embody them in language was not for want of sources, which up to this day continue to multiply and flow upon me. History and biography, barren of comment, are most useless skeletons; but the comment must be sagacious, rich, eloquent, imaginative, sentimental, pointed, moral, profound, forcible, and new. What an array of excellences!—and who can hope to reach and combine them?

But if we cannot attain them all, we may attain some of them. We may contemplate great characters with the lights we have till we can form them into new portraits. The outlines must be the same; but the tints, colourings, and aspects may be new. The figures also may be differently grouped, and by new positions may bring forth new results. I am not at all sure that the picture of the reign of Queen Elizabeth might not be made to appear almost as fresh and novel as if it had been but scantily written, and as wild and interesting as a romance.

But perhaps it would not be proper to range such a composition under the denomination of history. It might form a class of its own. It must not be confounded with the historic novel,* which professes inventive incidents to historic outlines. In this truth must be professed and pursued; but probable and conjectural truth, not founded on positive documents and proofs.

* In 1820, while confined to the sofa by illness at Florence, I printed there a small volume, little known, in the nature of a "Historic Novel," entitled "Sir Ralph Willoughby." In this I have given an ideal character of Sir Walter Raleigh and Lady Arabella Stuart; and which is in the nature of the sort of novel alluded to in the text. Mrs. Thomson's "Life of Raleigh," 1830, recalls to me all that copious apparatus of minute history and biography during this period, which I once cultivated so assiduously. At this thought I cannot refrain from mourning over the wreck of my recollections. What I once knew, I fondly supposed that I should always know; but it is gone—a few broken gleams only remain. If I had the knowledge now, what a delightful use I would make of it!

With years, of which I must expect every one that succeeds to be the last, and with many tasks already undertaken, I cannot positively resolve myself to execute the commencement of such a design; but I have a fitful and glancing hope that I may do it. It seems to me peculiarly fitted to my own turn and habits of mind. It would not force me to turn over books, and examine authorities and details, for which I am now become too lazy and feeble. It would allow me the free exercise of my own uncramped ideas. I should not be responsible for any inadvertence of facts; and I should not require the array of a large English library, which I no longer have at command. Above all, I should not be driven to resort to my memory, which is now so rapidly forsaking me.

I like to lie in bed meditating and dreaming the livelong day, as well as the night, with only my own mind and my pen to rely upon. I think I could bring out many figures which are now only dimly and vaguely seen in a sort of shadowy twilight. All these may be fond delusions of my warm brain. But then they are pure, innocent, and happy delusions. When we can create, or even think that we can create, we are pleased with ourselves.

When I say that I can no longer turn over books, but rather love to invent and speculate, I say it with a mixture of dissatisfaction and melan-

choly. They were a great treasure to me. A lively work, which should recall the pith of those things, would be full of interest. But it is not to be done by an old man removed by seas and mountains from all the proper materials.*

Gibbon had once a plan of giving a "Catalogue Raisonnée" of the immense treasure of books he had referred to in his noble work. This would have been the richest piece of bibliography in the world. I gave up ten years to the bibliography of old English literature—from 1806 to 1816—viz. my eighteen volumes of "Censura Literaria," "British Bibliographer," and "Restituta."† I had far better been employed in original composition. When once we resort to compilation, the mind grows lazy or fearful. My enemies will say

* My "Memoirs of the Peers of James I." were published about 1800. Only one volume was completed, because a bookseller bought the whole impression, and then immediately after the delivery became bankrupt, without paying a shilling for it: it was vain therefore to be at the great expense of printing another volume, when the first was out of my hands. The work is nothing more than a compilation, but I trust it brings together numerous authentic and curious notices of the period. I had previously given a "Biographical List of the Peers of Queen Elizabeth," in a pamphlet, "On the Augmentations of the Peerage," 1798. Between 1806 and 1812, I also went through the labour of giving a new edition of "Collins's Peerage," 9 vols. 8vo, of which at least one half is an addition to former editions.

† See also for foreign literature, "Res Literaria," vol. 1. Naples, 1820; vol. 2. Rome, 1821; vol. 3. Geneva, 1821.—"Polyanthea Librorum Vetustiorum," Geneva, 1822. — "Cimelia," Geneva, 1823.

I did so, because I had no resources of my own; and in the present work they will say that I dwell too much on my own speculations:—so, do what we will, we are always blamed. It will be for the sagacious and candid to judge, whether I can or cannot think for myself. I think Johnson says in his "Life of Milton," that little things are only valued when coming from him who can do great things well.

What is that narrowness of criticism, which expects from every one the same powers, the same pursuits, and the same discipline? The fruits of the mind are of a thousand shapes, flavours and uses. If there be culture, and rectitude, and superiority of any kind, it ought to be received with favour. I shall not concern myself about the malignant censures and detractions to which I am exposed. If the cold snarler says that I have no originality or force of mind, let him enjoy his spite and his growl:—let him throw off the gall of his heart; it will relieve him, and do me no harm.

I would not be at the capricious mercy of any one's opinion. I repeat the words of Horace I have often cited before—"Mea virtute me involvo!" What I repent of is this, that I have not given full reins to that sort of imagination which I believe to produce the true spirit of poetry. The more I reflect, the more convinced I am that poetry does not lie in the studied glitter of diction.

If the "Mirror for Magistrates" had been written by men of true poetical genius—which, with the exception of Buckhurst, it was not—it would have been a grand work; the design was highly poetical. A great genius might now well take up the plan. But it will not do for word-mongers and flower-dressers. I have not much mercy for those who bring poetry into disrepute by fantasticalities.

Suppose my censors say, that I am nothing but a book-worm—a transcriber of extracts—a joiner of rhapsodies—can I not look into myself? Can I not calmly decide whether this character is true? Is nothing of sentiment, or reflection, or force of language, to be found in what I put forth? Do I speak with animation of those whom I have occasion to mention? Does it appear as if I embodied their apparitions? Do I enter into their characters? Is there any thing of the sustained exhalation of a warm and lively heart in my ideas and language? Is there loftiness or pathos of feeling, or ardour of imagery? Or have I dealt only in the trifles of literature; in those petty curiosities which prove only a technical memory and a minute attention? Have I shown that I know how to estimate grandeur of views, acuteness of intellect, and courage of heart? Do I make a right estimate of mankind?

I will venture to say that this last is the grand test both of genius and talent. In treating of this

subject let us look to the traits upon which an author seizes. If he cavils upon petty points, we know the turn and extent of his own mind. We are sure by what excites his sympathy what are his own feelings. If he expresses no opinions at all, his barrenness proves his want of intellect;—if he expresses borrowed opinions, he is little better than barren;—if he expresses wrong ones, the degree of his inferiority must depend on the character and degree of the error. But of this I think we may be sure, that he who constantly coincides with what is great and right, must himself have a mind which is great and right.*

He whose delight lies in endeavouring to dispel the charm of splendid characters proves his own soul to be mean. He will not believe that which, looking inward, he does not experience in himself. They who are always looking out for littlenesses are led by their own consciousness. The sagacity of evil is like the sagacity of good, derived from the internal mirror. They in whose own bosoms noble motives have dominion, give others credit for them, unless where there are open proofs, or strong presumptions to the contrary. There is no wisdom in confounding the wicked with the good, or the foolish with the able.

If an author writes a great deal upon men and human affairs, and writes frankly, we cannot be

* Do not let us have the old joke upon this:—
"Who drives fat oxen must himself be fat!"

deceived as to his own character, when the whole tenor of his opinions and sentiments continues the same from beginning to end. When the pen is taken up upon an insulated subject for a particular purpose, it may be otherwise.

The mind that is frivolous will show its frivolity in spite of all attempts at reserve and disguise :— it will remark on traits which are insignificant, without knowing their insignificance. Even in the selection of materials the character of the intellect will show itself. Therefore in the humble labour of compilation the proof of talent, or the contrary, will break out.

And let us take commentators,—small abilities write their notes not only without ingenuity, but upon minor points. Turn to the various annotators on Shakspeare, and this will be exemplified. Look at Johnson's eloquent notes, not only in their execution, but in their choice of subjects. Word-catchers, and expositors of insignificant manners and customs, show the bent of their thoughts and labours.

Even among men of genius and talents the colour and quality of them will thus appear. Take Lord Orford—in his numerous and amusing anecdotes, observe how constantly he fastens upon petty, and for the most part artificial, points. Amid the resistless fire of Chatham's eloquence, he would have seen the ridiculous in the derangement of his wig! While fully aware of the force

of Gray's lyric sublimity, he pourtrayed his character by the notice of his shyness and awkwardness in the company of two ladies of rank, with whom he was little acquainted. But, to the disgrace of the public taste, these pettitesses are among the causes of this noble author's great popularity as a describer of characters with the mass of readers, who thus believe that they are let behind the curtain into the secrets of human nature. What a painful remark are we compelled to make on those who think so!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Subtle ingenuity not greatness of mind—Greatness of thought often vague—Cold reasoners—Imaginative loftiness—Milton and Raleigh —What is a scribbler?—The mechanical merits of authorship—Sterile works encumber the press—Effects of the scenery of nature on man—Poets must direct them—False models—False clevernesses and false stimulants—Dominion of charlatanism—False philosophizing—Public opinion—Systematizing, a folly—We must not attempt to reason away appearances—History, &c. written on system, will not do—Systems change; nature is always the same—Despotism and aristocracy not to be judged by their abuses—Respect for birth inherent in man's bosom—Old English nobility—Tales of wonder—German school—Exaggeration and factitious excitement—Charlatanism common to all ages—Piquancy—Love of reading increased, but light and immethodical—Want of good faith in public writing—The public mind superficial—Literary habits not easily given up—Effects of want of popularity—Genius might by due management force attention—What new paths might be opened —Beneficial effects of adversity—Gray's "Hymn"—Follies of fashion and hobgobleries—Tales more sober, and in a sounder taste —Puffing—New class of novels proposed—The author's growing debility—He is still sensible to the charms of nature—Stories of rural life—Pure fiction—Non-popularity—Contempt of mob-taste —Insensibility to fame difficult to be acquired—Happiness of solitude—Great men often covered with obloquy—Instanced in Sir Walter Raleigh.

A SUBTLE ingenuity must not be mistaken for greatness; it is the reverse of it. Great minds overlook the minute and the near for the distant

and the grand; for this reason sublimity is often vague, while precision of outline destroys the spell. Cold reasoners are like purblind men who grope out their way by inches; but will what stands on the authority of all wisdom and all luminous conviction, be raised above capricious cavil and dissent of many among the multitude? —No; arrogant ignorance and obstinate self-sufficiency will, when malignant passion stimulates, deny or dispute. There is a lower scale of judgment, which those of meaner faculties can much more easily employ.

There is a faculty with which the highest of human beings are endowed, far above reason; it is an imaginative loftiness, lifted on the wings of purified and immaterial passion: it has more of soul than mere understanding. This Milton had above all other men: this, I think, Raleigh had at times, though broken by intervals of worldly ambition and worldly craft. But this sort of spirit is so incomprehensible to common beings, that they cannot believe it to exist.

A mind of such a nature is lost upon common critics; yet they on whom it is bestowed ought not to be the less complacent at it. No abuse, or sarcasm, or detraction, can take it from them: they may remain firm on the elevation of their own place.

Let it be a charge against an author that he is a scribbler,—then we come to the question, What is

a scribbler?—He is one who writes foolish or insipid stuff in abundance, so as to tire the press. We know that eloquence can never be insipid, and that original thought can never be trite. Are the facts told worth knowing?—are the reflections and sentiments just and touching? If they are, they are valuable lamps to society. Excellence is rarest in moral writings, because they require the finest qualities of the mind.

But there is a prevailing rule of attaching certain mechanical merits to authorship, which has the effect of inverting the true order of genius and ability. The workmanship is of little value unless the ore be sterling; and if it be sterling, it will support itself in spite of negligent workmanship. To lay so much stress upon workmanship, therefore, discourages what most requires to be called forth. If we admit the commended works to be correct in form, what signifies it when they want life?

Where there is no imagination there is also a sterility of comment and deadness of feeling: no labour, nor art, nor propriety of language, can supply these. Innumerable compositions of this sort daily oppress and nauseate us, and diminish the respect for authorship by making it dull and unimpressive. Our pride will not suffer us to be taught by those whom we do not deem our superiors in talent and wisdom.

Man was formed by Providence to have his

senses delighted and soothed by the elements and scenery of nature, and to have his mind and heart work in alliance with them; but he requires the hand of genius to lead him on, and direct him, and awaken his sleeping energies. Even of those minds that have fancy and sensibility, not one in a hundred will move till it is struck.

But authors who have the capacity are too often withdrawn by false models from performing this service. They use imagery not in its natural alliance with the visions of the mind, but solely as secondary, to represent those visions by material types, either in the way of simile or metaphor. Both should form separate and essential parts of one whole; not be identified. By this confusion either one or the other is sacrificed, and seen only subordinately.

I confess that many of the clevernesses on which authors pride themselves appear to me to mislead the mind; and they are stimulants that will not keep. It is not by inventing substitutes for nature, but by showing nature herself in all her spiritual brightness, that we are executing the highest purposes of intellect.

But it rarely happens that simple genius excites in the first instance the notice of a corrupted public. The word cannot be too often repeated; —charlatanism has nearly an absolute dominion, and nothing in the way of popularity can be done but by charlatanism. There is something of a

false philosophizing attempted, to account for this, as if it was in the nature of things; and public opinion has been set up as the test of merit, and the test of that which ought to rule. This was not Milton's theory or sentiment,* though he was a liberal, a reformer, and a people's man.

There is not that system in politics or morals, by which the would-be wise account for every thing,—a sort of pretension to reasoning on every occasion upon fancied principles of nature. A noble heart, impelling a quick sagacity, tells us what is right and great. If we endeavour to reduce every thing to an artificial system, we shall find ourselves at last in an inextricable labyrinth of errors. The Divinity, no doubt, has a system, of which we only see a small part, and of the whole of which we shall vainly hope to penetrate the mysteries and the extent: we must judge, therefore, according to the obvious tendency of the detached portions which are before us, and be content with those impressions which come upon us, and satisfy and delight the native purity of our bosoms.

What history, what biography, what fiction, was ever long endured that was written upon a system? Systems change with every age, and often two or three times in an age. Morals and

* See "Paradise Regained."

the great principles of political government are always the same; human nature is always the same. In what instance are not Shakspeare's reflections, observations, and sentiments, as applicable to the present day as to the day in which he wrote? Why, therefore, do we talk of the enlightened age, and of the march of intellect? Genius disdains systems, and laughs them to scorn.

Despotism will sometimes abuse its power; aristocracy will sometimes be insolent, or foolish, or corrupt, or oppressive; but, in the frail state of human nature, will the dominion of the populace be more pure, or virtuous, or wise? The old nobility may not be what we would wish them to be; but is it possible that equality can exist for a day? And if inequality must exist, what so palatable as this? When they are insolent, is their insolence like that of new-got wealth? It is a counteraction to intrigue, craft, fraud, corruption, and violence, and "leaves" men "leisure to be good."

The respect for it, in spite of all asseverations to the contrary, cannot be eradicated from the human bosom; and he who has it, and does not experience a complacent satisfaction at the reflection on it, is a fool, or something worse,—that is, a hypocrite who disguises what he feels. I am well aware how much my feelings in this respect, expressed perhaps with too much frankness, have contributed to my unpopularity The few really

old nobility of England are some of the oldest and noblest of Europe: they may be called aboriginal,—looking to the Conquest, and some even towards Charlemagne.

As to those "Tales of Wonder," partly drawn from the German school,—which the multitude, when they once taste them, so much demand, on account of the strong stimulants in which they deal,—the effect of them upon popular literature is sincerely to be regretted. All stories of which the plot is marked by extraordinary violence,—whether of dangers, or surprises, or murders, or apparitions,—vitiate and deaden the sensibility by a repetition of false excitement. The highest genius is awakened, and awakens, by the appearances and incidents of the ordinary course of nature. They who would be read a second time, must not depend on such momentary attractions. The mob will always love marvels when once indulged in them: they cannot with uncultivated minds be otherwise than too much inclined to them.

It will be observed that charlatanism has prevailed in every age of literature; and that false glitter and show have ever usurped the place of modest genius. Yes,—but did it ever before take such an absolute predominance as it has now? Fifty years ago the chief literary men did not follow the cry of the mob, but led it.

There is but one demand,—"Be piquant; it is useless to write and print unless you are piquant." All therefore is sacrificed to piquancy; not only good taste, but solid truth is sacrificed to piquancy: chaste writers are driven out of the field.

But unfortunately, when there is nothing but piquancy, piquancy itself ceases to be piquant: the dose must be doubled till it kills. There is little of this piquancy in the classical authors of former days who have continued to survive the changes of fashion. Sound sense does not deal in these points and stings, and unexpected likenesses and differences: there is a sedateness—a complacent sense of simple force—in genuine wisdom. All excess of excitement ends in languor and *ennui:* where there is a flow, there must be an ebb. None of those nice touches which delight but fatigue not, are to be found in the favourite works of the day.

The public now, perhaps, read a great deal, but in so confused and immethodical a manner that they retain no impressions; it is like an evanescent stamp upon moist sand. All they learn is to deface what they once had been taught, and to have no opinions at all,—except that every one may think after his own fashion, and that all old received principles are narrow and unenlightened prejudices. There is scarcely any good faith in

modern writing; all is written on one side, in the spirit of an advocate.

The public thus become superficial, vain, conceited, talkative, heartless. They will pay no respect or attention to any author who does not write on their own side and echo their own opinions. A teacher they disdain, an adviser they smile at, a contradicter they cover with obloquy. Then, under such circumstances, who that will not make himself a slave will continue to be an author?

I know not how it is, but he who has once contracted the habits of literary occupation and literary composition cannot well give them up: his ideas encumber and oppress him unless he brings them out, and he loses his self-respect. To be sure, it is not very pleasant to sing to deaf ears; but what happened to Milton may be endured by inferior men. When Raleigh's immortal "History of the World" was published, it was coldly received, and the bookseller complained that he lost by it. I suppose that at that very moment, as now, the silliest scribblings were received with popular plaudits.

Yet, under these discouragements, I think a bold mind, with genius, which has time before it, might make itself attended to. While the multitude are daring and capricious, they yet are to be conquered. Novelty will do much, whether it be a just or unjust novelty: when glare, and exagge-

ration, and marvels have done their utmost, then a return to great simplicity may please by its contrast. What if natural sentiment and pictures of those unforced feelings in quiet life among the educated and refined, which exalt our being and give us delight without exhausture, should be tried,—and history and biography be animated by the magical hues of imagination? If it be said that this has already been done, at least in Scott's novels, still there is room for much more of it, and rather in a different form.

The field appears to me a very wide one, and very little trod in the parts I allude to. I would not be too confident that brandy-drinkers could be brought to relish the living waters of the pure fountain; but for novelty's sake I think that it is not improbable.

It is rarely before the human heart has been softened and schooled by adversity, that it begins duly to feel and value those simple charms of nature, accompanied by those plaintive reflections which make the soul of poetry, and which have been so beautifully and with such philosophical truth described by Gray in his Hymn to that goddess,—that "tamer of the human breast,"—who has so wide a dominion over us mortals.

Let us dismiss the frivolous embarrassments and disappointments of fashion, or the insane hob-goblins of a factitious enthusiasm, for tales which shall awaken our virtuous sympathies for the woes

of real life and general nature: let us keep to the soberness of truth, but not be either the less profound in the emotions of the bosom, or less striking in the visions of the imagination. It is time to get rid of these epigrammatic, stilted, bandaged, glittering, foaming, lashed-up, frothy, factitious, high-seasoned productions of mercenary artists, exciting the appetites of the mob for the purpose of filling their own pockets. But even these stimulant ingredients would not be sufficient without the aid of the puff,—quite as gross and as multiplied as those of the quack-doctors, or the proprietors of "matchless blacking." It is strange that such obviously paid applauses should have any influence on the public favour; but it is clear that they have great influence, for the experience of booksellers would teach them not to throw away so much money in vain. They have so contrary an effect on me, that the moment I read one of those advertisements I take for granted that the book so announced is bad.

I see an opening for a new class of novels or prose-fictions, which a young and ardent mind of inventive genius might execute with a great probability of success. For my own part,—even if I had the capacity for them, of which I will not venture to be sure,—my remaining time is far too short, even for the designs I have already commenced. Indeed I feel fits of debility, which render it probable that a suspension, if not ex-

tinction, of all faculties, may soon ensue, both mental and bodily. I grow slow and torpid, and often inclined to doze in a half-insensible languor. How I have survived so long, after all I have gone through, is a sincere subject of daily wonder to me.

Yet in one respect age has not deadened me,—I see the charms of nature with a more lively sense of delight than at any former period of my life; and I see how this state of existence might have been made almost a paradise by a contented and cultivated mind, protected by independence. But then all the stormy passions must have been kept down and eradicated; and, above all, ambition and vanity absolutely excluded.

Among the things I would have wished to have done, would have been to have drawn stories containing imaginative exemplifications of such a state. I have all the ideas floating in my mind, with numerous particular scenes, sentiments, and incidents; but I have no courage to begin what I foresee I have no time before me to execute. It seems to me that the moral effect of such tales would be very soothing and instructive; but I am not insensible that they would require a delicate hand and vivid touches.

Such a design would put to a severe trial the powers of pure fiction. It would allow no artifices of exaggeration, or point, or glitter, or marvel: all which are, in my opinion, within the

reach of secondary talents, and such as secondary talents are very much inclined to resort to: it would require a calm seclusion, and freedom from those interruptions which cause irritating disturbances of the temper: it would require a clear head, cheerful spirits, and an easy conscience. These, it will be said, are numerous requisites not likely to concur in one person; and it will be added, how vain must he be, who, when conscious of the necessity of such qualities, can have ever cherished the plan for himself? Yet, fully aware of the liability to this censure, I have entertained it.

If I judge by the reception I have had from the mass of readers, I have little reason to think well of myself; but I never will allow mob-taste to pronounce on intellectual merit, and I am far above mortification at not finding myself suited to it;—not that I can shut my mind to the fact that critics of a higher cast now submit to the dominion of the mob, and in their fear and servility pronounce after its dictates; a great deal of which has arisen from the under-plot of revolutionary plans, by which it was deemed expedient to hold out popular opinion as the test of just demand; and when once admitted in one department, how can it be refused in another?

To be insensible to fame would argue a hardness of mind which could never produce good fruit; yet to get over a morbid desire of it is an

indispensable duty of dignified sentiment. It may be done, but I know from my own experience how difficult it is. There are desponding moments, when, examining ourselves with as much severity as we will, we are fearful of self-delusion in our own favour.

I do best in solitude, and, assuredly, am happiest there. Let me wander alone in the privacy of my own thoughts; and if praise is not destined to reach me, why should censure and obloquy reach me? But great men—the practical benefactors of mankind upon a mighty scale—have been covered with obloquy as well as such a diminutive insect as I am. Raleigh went to the trial for his life the most hated and calumniated man in England;—he came out of it the most glorious, most admired, and adored. So it stands upon the record of his intelligent contemporaries.

CHAPTER XXV.

These Memorials will be best on a second perusal—Their generalization—Repeated expositions of the principles of poetry—Is the form of essays necessary?—These principles mainly founded on sentiment—A poet not a man of the world—Pretended humility—Certain qualities common to all true poets—Verse-writers whose subjects are manners—Witty merriment—Citation from Collins—Observation—They who depend on the judgment of the multitude must conform to the multitude—Man said to be born for society, not solitude—Melancholy cast of the author—Praise of solitude—Burns—Bloomfield—Kirke White—Shelley—My motto—Caprice of popularity—The popular taste directed by some influential leader—Each class of society has its own jests and slang—Necessary to know and discriminate these things—True tests of fame necessary—Milton, Shakspeare, Cowley, Dryden, and Pope—Sublimity and strength—Genius requires encouragement—Justification of repeated discussions on poetical principles—How far they are proper materials for biography—Diversity of tastes—Abstract disquisitions not popular—Moral and critical truths contained in these Memorials—Anecdotes soon exhaust—Superficial memoirs—Danger of liveliness and piquancy—Cowley's question how to acquire permanent fame—Answer—Self-praisers—Nothing free from objection and detraction—Union between mind and action—Sir Walter Raleigh—Contrasted with Rousseau—Sir Robert Cecil.

I AM willing to suppose that my Memorials may give more satisfaction on a second perusal than on the first; because they contain a great deal of generalization, which may make some amends for

the absence of numerous incidents of individual experience, and of the stirring stories of an active life, which are apt to excite more attention when first read, but when the novelty has ceased have no farther interest; whereas all general principles, reflections, and incidents apply to all persons and all times. I am not unaware what objections may—nay, I am sure, will—be made to my perpetual return to the expositions of particular subjects, such as the principles of poetry; but if I am permitted to write an autobiography, how can I fairly do otherwise? Am I not bound to tell what mainly occupies my own thoughts? The question will then be, whether it is just or not—and if just, whether trite or novel.

But perhaps it may then be objected, that, even if just and novel, these discussions had better have been communicated in the shape of essays. It is easy to object and cavil; but I am sure that when introduced into the life of an individual they have a more practical interest, as they thus bear with them proof of their sincerity and actual influence upon conduct. I know not how the life of a literary man can be properly told, except by relating his leading opinions and sentiments. Perhaps his sentiments are more important than his opinions; but all the principles of poetry are at least as much subjects of sentiment as opinion—I believe more so. I know no good poetry which does not

spring as much from the heart as from the head. A poet may have fierce passions and wrong passions, but passion he must have.

It does not seem to me that a poet can be, in the common sense, a man of the world; for a man of the world is a man of craft, and the feelings of a poet are too prominent to allow him to be crafty: I have never seen one, nor ever read of one, who was decidedly a poet. But it will be asked, why I assume myself to be a poet. I do assume it, and must take the consequence. I scorn a false humility; it springs from a most immovable self-conceit lying at the bottom. That complacence of self-abasement, which fools think so amiable, is in truth the most insufferable outbreak of insulting condescension. It is as if one should feel,—"I am so indisputably superior, that nothing I can say against myself will make any one doubt my pre-eminence." He who deems it necessary to assert his own dignity, knows that many call it in question.

We see among poets a variety of qualities and dispositions, but there are some which all must have in common. When an author of verses is at all times master of himself, he cannot be a poet;—he may be a writer of good epigrams. The power of a poet's imagination is often too strong for his reason; and visions often carry him away from his company, when the craft of the world requires that all his minute observance should be present

with them. This minute observance is what the mean-minded intend by common sense.

Some of these writers of verses, who set up for poets, are called "brilliant men." Their talent lies in this,—that they have a sharp watchfulness of all that is passing in society; their eye and their ear catches every incongruity; and then, with the aid of a little collocation, and dislocation, and exaggeration, they make it the subject of witty merriment. But this is the reverse of a poet, who seizes the grand, the tender, and the beautiful;—who, being disgusted by ordinary characters and manners, instead of being amused by them, flies to the woods and mountains to invent something more fair or more exalted.

Collins, in a fit of momentary terror at the dangers of imagination, exclaims—

> Youth of the quick, uncheated sight,
> Thy paths, Observance, more invite!

But this was contrary to all his habitual feelings and conduct. Why should we wish to know what frivolous people think and do? It is the business of high literature to detach us from them, and lull us into a forgetfulness of them; but will he whose skill lies in exposing their absurdities, desert his 'vantage-ground?

That observation which collects materials for invention may be good; but then we must regard the quality of the invention.

Whoever derives his fame, not from the best literary judges, but from those who take the leading part in the actual affairs of life, must conform to the taste of his patrons, even if nature did not impel him to it; but it commonly happens that they take him up because his taste is congenial to their own. Habits of business and constant mixture with society would spoil them, even if they had inborn taste or genius; but as they are insensible to natural scenery, or the simple emotions of the heart, they look for excitement in the artificial complexities of wit.

It will be urged that man was born for society, and not for solitude: no doubt, the mass of men were so born; but a few were born for better purposes, and, "from the loop-holes of retreat," to give lofty instruction or elevating amusement to the minds of their fellow-beings. The jest may be borne if it is well-directed, but do not let it be put upon a par with the higher efforts of genius. For my part I am, and always was, of a grave and melancholy turn, and have preferred my own serious thoughts to the gaiety and roar of frolicsome companions. It was always so with those who loved that strict poetry of which the essence is invention.

It is said that solitude makes the hard heart still harder: if this be true, it makes the pure and lofty heart still purer and loftier. In all intercourse with the world, the most virtuous incur a

great alloy. Out of the temptations of society no one can come totally without a stain. If it be asserted that speculative goodness is of little value, then it follows that the qualities and condition of the mind go for nothing; but it is the mind which will be hereafter answerable, not the body.

The Edinburgh Reviewers observe of Burns, that they think more of his poetical genius from the history of his Life, even than from his writings. The observation is a just one; and something of the same sort had been already said by others. Allan Cunningham's Life, which I have just perused, is an eloquent and generous defence of one of the truest poets and noblest of beings. He has made the poet come out bright and pure ore from the fiery furnace. Beautiful as Burns was in description, he was still more beautiful in sentiment; —and real unaffected sentiment will always be at imagery. It is Burns's glory, that he did not write as an artist. If he had had a higher and more classical education, and had been born in a more fashionable and worldly station of life, he would not have written so well. In that case his raciness and force would have been filed and polished down. It is Burns's life which has thrown a halo round his poetry.

Of Bloomfield the public have ceased to inquire or to think, because no anecdotes or wonders have been told of him. Kirke White is kept alive by the

memoir of him written by Southey; and the melancholy excitement awakened by Shelley's fate in a sea-storm has drawn a notice and popularity upon him, of which neither his writings nor his character acquired the smallest portion when alive. Such is the capricious public, and such are its feelings and its taste! I offended the many in a way for which they have never forgiven me, when I took for the motto of one of my early works (I believe, "Mary De Clifford,") Horace's line, *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.* If any one denies that popularity is greatly dependent on caprice, accident, and extraneous circumstances, he is strangely ignorant of the history of literature and the character of mankind. Moore admits that a combination of fortuitous incidents contributed to force Byron at once into a blaze of notice.

If then the chances are that the higher efforts of the Muse will not acquire fame, where is the inducement to bring them forth?—Because such labours are impelled by other motives besides love of fame. We cannot suppress the native emotions of the bosom, or visions of the imagination; and when they swell within, they will have vent.

Leave the people to themselves, and they will not be touched by the picturing forth the shadowy apparitions which haunt high genius: when pointed out to them by influential leaders, they will begin to suppose themselves pleased, and will

echo the plaudits which it is the fashion to express. We need not wonder at this; it is the natural course which common minds take.

The classes of society that congregate in their different departments have each their own jests and slang, by which they encourage themselves in the persuasion of their own self-consequence: they ill relish, therefore, what addresses none of these factitious opinions and prejudices. They delight to contemplate their own likenesses in the mirror, and gaze, like Narcissus, upon the stream that reflects their own beauty.

It is important to see these things in their true light, and at least to distinguish the bearings and the evils which we cannot change. We are bound, in the endless exuberance of modern literature, to exercise a discriminate and just taste; and this requires simple, clear, and precise principles. By thus bringing them forward, an opportunity is afforded, if they are erroneous, to set them right. But let him receive honour to whom honour is due. Before we can distribute fame properly, we must first accurately establish what are the faculties and fruits which are most entitled to it.

Milton, Shakspeare, Spenser,—our three great names of old times,—will every where abide these tests: Cowley, Dryden, and Pope, only occasionally: and scarce any of the other poets either of the metaphysical or the French school, at all;—

the invention is for the most part cold, or unnatural and corrupt. The finest compositions are best designed for those who want amusement, comfort, and elevation in retirement and obscurity.

It will not be denied that sublimity is superior to what is witty and comic, and strength to sharpness; and that what instructs or affects us in our most sober moments is most to be prized. This fixes the scale of the various classes of poetry and poetical genius, and does not leave the estimate to be made at the caprice of the multitude; but still these tests will not be applied unless we force them forward.

Genius, to nourish itself in its own warmth, ought to be encouraged in self-complacency; but it will be rarely encouraged at all, and never perhaps from benevolent motives. The busy and the bold, the charlatans, the intriguants, and the crafty, take possession of the public mind; or some striking accident, some stimulating surprise, brings authors into vogue. That not one reader in a hundred attempts to judge for himself, is quite clear. A right knowledge upon this subject is very important; but what is important it may be difficult to impress. The people will not attend to what it is disagreeable to be convinced of: they read to be amused and flattered, not to be taught.

I hear the common reader cry, "O, this eter-

nal discussion about poetry and genius! What do we want more about them?—do we not know already all that is worth knowing?" But if they know right, why do they not show it by their taste and their judgment? Nor is it true that the subject is at all settled among the multitude of modern critics: it was well understood by the ancients from the time of Aristotle; but modern critics have introduced all sorts of confusion and contradiction into it. A literary man said to me, "I know what pleases me in poetry,—that is sufficient for me; I care not how." By this rule, a puppet-show might be proved to be poetry. The question is not, whether one is pleased with a composition, but whether one is pleased with it as poetry. Many may like, not poetry, but something which they may think better than poetry. The driest of those couplets of Pope, which merely consist of unadorned, unsentimental reasoning or axioms, are to many more pleasing than the noblest passages of Milton.

It will next be said,—"Even if these discussions are in themselves good, still we do not want them in biography: there we want incidents, and actions, and stories, and anecdotes." This would be just, were it the life of a man of the world; but surely not of a secluded author. I am not writing the life of the Duke of Wellington or Sir Robert Peel.

The diversity of tastes is endless, and in many

respects not to be reasoned upon; nor is it desirable that all tastes should be the same: but what I myself look for in a book is opinion and sentiment rather than facts. In works of history and biography I read with avidity those critical notes in which opinions are pronounced; and when those opinions are tinged by sentiment, they are still more attractive.

I am aware that the public very rarely relish purely abstract disquisitions; but the most speculating and generalizing memoir of an individual cannot be purely abstract. Whatever it be, it must in the present instance take its chance as that which the author could best perform. Let its reception in the first instance be what it may, I have a calm confidence that finally it will be found to contain many moral and critical truths which will be admitted to be both just and forcible, and many sentiments which will secure the sympathy of the sensitive and simple-hearted; and that if it once obtains any circulation, it will permanently retain its place. These are proud words, and I must abide the peril of them; but let it be considered how long I have travelled in literature, and how deeply and with what good faith I have thought: and then I have this experience, that though almost all I have written has been slow in making its way, nothing has been forgotten or turned to waste. When a book full of facts and anecdotes is new, it catches; but the

pleasure is soon exhausted, and all that is good gets into other works! but sterling thought and sentiment retain their interest and use; nor can they be so transferred, because much of the colouring depends on the language in which they are conveyed.

Many memoirs have been published,—light, superficial, and popular,—in which not a single general truth of any force or depth is to be found. Such books are often read with avidity, forgotten in half a year, and in the next go to the service of the pastrycook; but to what is generally and permanently true we refer again and again, and, as time by going over its head verifies it, it becomes more interesting and more instructive. We suspect the views of the moment as liable to be influenced by temporary excitations: we therefore desire to compare our opinions with those of a former age which have proved themselves stable; and if we find them the same, we cherish them as our guides, and record them in our hearts.

But the desire to be lively and piquant destroys the sincerity and soundness of more than half the memoir-writers: they have that sort of vanity which actuates those who wish to appear good companions. This is merely the amusement of the hour, which, when one reflects upon it, commonly nauseates: it is for the most part fallacious, and throws over life an outward smile on which there is no dependence: it has something

of the kind of comic characters on a stage, which come forth to jest as a trade or profession. Nothing will touch the wise or intelligent, but that which unveils the depths of the heart, or developes the buried thoughts of the understanding.

Cowley exclaims,—

> What shall I do to be for ever known?

Write, without regard to popular opinion, what is noble and profound: it will outlast all the glories of the Pitts, and Fox's, and Marlboroughs, and Wellingtons, and Napoleons. Actions die almost with their performers—Mind lives immortally. But who will hear the *laudatorem sui ipsius?* If one proves himself superior, that cannot be forgiven: if he makes the attempt and fails, then ridicule is added to hate. If he makes confessions to his own disgrace, it gains plaudits,—but they are the plaudits of triumph over him. But firmness in a just cause will win the palm at last, though it may be only to flourish over his grave.

There are some men whose prose is poetry, but of whom it is then said that their poetry is prose. This is uttered either in mere spite, or because they do not know wherein the essence of poetry lies; but if we do nothing till we can be exempt from objection and detraction, we must pass our lives with our hands before us, and our faculties in a state of stagnation. But even inaction and absolute insignificance will not protect us.

The union between mind and action is very doubtful and rare. Few men have exhibited this in so striking a degree as Sir Walter Raleigh. I am not quite satisfied with any character which has yet been drawn of him. It is held that his imagination predominated over his prudence, and that he had not practical wisdom: I do not think so. He saw deep into the human character, and followed up theory by action: he had a heart and hand to execute what he had a head to contrive. A combination of unfortunate circumstances, which were not in the ordinary course of human events, thwarted his success. He would not have fallen a sacrifice to any other monarch, than one so outrageously pusillanimous and treacherous as King James: he always managed Queen Elizabeth,—sagacious, and tyrannical, and hard, and self-willed as she was. Instead of being more theoretical than practical, I think that practical views always prompted his theories.

I cannot choose a greater opposite to him than Rousseau, who was only high, wise, and noble in theory, and in practice very mean, feeble, and foolish. He was so conscious of this, and it afflicted and overset him so much, that, if he was insane, this perhaps was the cause. That he had an excess of morbid sensibility, which Raleigh had not, is certain. I doubt if Raleigh could have lived upon the pure imaginations of the mind,—his ambition was all worldly; and if he had

given himself up to fiction, whether poetry or prose, it would have been more moral and axiomatic than visionary or spiritual. Cecil beat him in effecting his purposes, because Cecil relied upon craft, while he relied upon strength. But Rousseau could not under any circumstances have been a practical man; nor could Raleigh under any circumstances have invented such a narrative as the tale of "Julia in the storm, on the Lake of Geneva." Suppose that, according to the usage of modern criticism, in reviewing Raleigh the writers had called for the powers which produced Rousseau's tempest-scene—and in reviewing Rousseau, for the strong sense, knowledge of affairs, and profound worldly sagacity of Raleigh;—they would thus have made both appear deficient in the essential requisites of genius or talent for literary excellence. So goes the world; and with such opposition have the highest endowments to contend.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Death of Bonstetten in 1832 — Character — His last work — Early education—Visit to England in 1769—Intimacy with Gray—His politics—Enters the Grand Council—Society of Berne—Character of Haller—His hobby—Voltaire's friendship for Bonstetten—Haller's death—His calmness and courage—His passion for books and solitude—His disappointments—The faults of Haller were those of the age—Bonstetten's article on Prince Charles Edward and his consort the Comtesse d'Albany—Her after-marriages with Alfieri and Fabre—Bonstetten's gallantries—His jealousy of Alfieri—His introduction to Cardinal de Bernis—to Comte Firmian—Society of Milan—Firmian's character—His library—Anecdote at a ball of the Archduke's—Why Italian ladies never waltz—Bonstetten's introduction to Pope Clement XIV.—His gracious reception—Conversation on Italian literature—Death of the Pope—Supposed to have been poisoned—The King of Naples—The Queen—Her numerous *liaisons*—Bonstetten's introduction to Matthison—Madame Laroche—Matthison's early poems—The poets' meeting—Matthison's residence with Bonstetten—Elisium—Bonstetten elected *Bailli* of Nyon—Chateau of Nyon—Consolations of nature—Bonstetten's official labours—Conversations with Matthison—Studies—Bonstetten and Gray at Cambridge—Gray's reported dislike of his own poetry—to talk of his early life—Comments of Author on Bonstetten's character of Gray—Matthison's removal to Lyons—Madame Brun—Matthison's marriage—Copenhagen—Matthison's divorce—Enters into the Prince Dessau's service—Bonstetten settles at Geneva—Matthison at Stutgard—His second marriage—Death of his wife—Soon followed by his own—Reflections.

THE year 1832 deprived me of one of my few Genevan friends. Victor de Bonstetten, the well-

known author, and, as he delighted to call himself, "friend of Gray," died February 7th, aged eighty-seven, being born in September, 1745. He was a noble Bernois, of the first family in that canton.

Bonstetten had lived much in the gay world, and prided himself on the number of his distinguished acquaintance. He was a man of numerous accomplishments—brilliant, original, and enthusiastic—and of varied, though light, erudition. He was talkative and conceited; but amusing, and, in the common sense, amiable. An absolute model of gallantry, he always paid compliments to the youngest belle in the room, even to his last days. He was a lively little man, with smooth, round, blooming cheeks, who betrayed in conversation none of the enthusiasm he discovered in his writings, and who seemed to me to have the silly pride of wishing in company to appear a man of the world.

The last of his numerous publications was his "Souvenirs," * which he gave to the world a few months before his death. We must not criticize this *brochure* too severely, for he writes with all the slight garrulity of extreme age. The three most interesting articles are his recollections of Haller, Matthison, and Gray.

* "Souvenirs de Ch. Victor de Bonstetten: ecrites en 1831." Paris, 1832. 12mo. pp. 124.

Bonstetten often talked to me about his infancy, his early boyhood, the neglect of the education of the sons of the patrician families in Berne, and the political institutions of that aristocratic canton as they then existed. Conscious how much his childhood had been neglected, he was sent by his own desire to Geneva, under the father of Professor Prevost; which venerable Professor is yet living at Geneva in his eighty-fourth year.

He mentioned, that at twelve or thirteen he was so conscious of the neglect of culture of his mind at Berne, that he entreated his father to remove him; and that he was at first sent to Yverdon, to the care of Mr. Haldimand, the brother of the governor of Canada,—I believe General Sir Frederick Haldimand.

He was the first Bernois inoculated by the small-pox, about 1753, 1754, or 1755. The great Haller persuaded his father to submit him to this operation.

In 1769, at the age of twenty-four, he visited England; and then it was that he became intimate with Gray, and paid him a visit at Cambridge. He afterwards engaged in the public affairs of the state; was always a liberal in his politics, perhaps ultra-liberal, and thus lost the favour of the Bernois in those revolutionary times.

"The ancient government of Berne," he says,

"had the faults of aristocracy, but it had all its virtues: all the distinguished patricians were entirely occupied in the service of the state."

In 1775 he entered into the grand council, at the age of forty. He then knew little of the laws of his country, though he had studied general law at Geneva and at Leyden. He had passed ten years of his youth in learning Latin, Greek, English, and Italian, but did not know perfectly even his own language—the German! At Geneva he had been much occupied with the study of Montesquieu and Machiavel. The society of Berne was composed of a mixture of manners—French, German, and Swiss: its literature was, in the sciences, German—in imagination, French. Its best magistrates had studied in Germany.

Bonstetten placed Haller at the head of all the great men whom he had known, saving Gray. His scientific works were all written in Latin. His poetry composed in his youth, and his conversation, prove that if he had lived in a great city, upon a larger theatre, he would have written like Buffon or Montesquieu. Haller was large in his person, and well made, though a little too fat: his look was piercing and full of intellect. Of all the men Bonstetten had known, he was the most spiritual and the most amiable: his immense knowledge had the grace of the *impromptu*. He loved the society of ladies, and the presence of a young beauty showed itself in the glitter of his

eyes. He lived habitually in his immense library, where he was always found writing: he was almost always alone. One day when Bonstetten found him writing, he had a serious conversation with him on free-will: while he talked he continued to write. The English papers were brought to him: he read them without quitting the pen or the conversation. Bonstetten was so astonished, that, when he had finished the journal, he took the liberty to ask permission to interrogate him on some of the articles. He had read and retained the whole.

Haller's great ambition was not to be the great *savant* of the world, but to be one of the *petit-conseil* of Berne! This desire to be of the Berne ministry led him to intolerance, political and religious. Haller and Bonstetten's father were sent to Lausanne on the part of the Berne government, to appease a theological quarrel which it was feared might produce inconvenient results. Voltaire was then established at Lausanne. Haller was inclined to severity against the dissidents; Bonstetten the father opposed all rigour. Bonstetten attributes Voltaire's future kindness to himself to grateful recollection of this conduct of his father. When at Geneva, Bonstetten was invited to all the *fêtes* which Voltaire gave; and for one whole year he went every Saturday to Ferney with M. Moulton and Mlle. Curchod, afterwards the wife of Necker.

He saw Haller for the last time in August, 1777, the year of his death. Haller predicted his approaching end. The reflection of no more seeing the brilliant and luminous meteor of the age, —the regret at beholding the decease of a great man,—gave to this evening passed with Haller the character of a magnificent setting of the sun in a desert. He spoke of the future like Socrates; he spoke of it with calmness and courage. "I never shall forget," says Bonstetten, "the sentiment of profound admiration and grief with which I and Tremblay took leave of him."

Haller has been reproached with an excess of orthodoxy; and Voltaire accused him, perhaps with reason, of intolerance. Bonstetten often conversed with him on reason and philosophy, and never could perceive the slightest traces of exaggerated opinions, or doubts of his salvation, of which there were so many rumours in his time.

The solitary life of Haller in his old age was very *triste:* the nutriture of his mind lay in the letters of the learned, and in his immense library. On returning from his travels, Bonstetten went to see him: it was in the autumn, at the beginning of night. He found him, as usual, alone, and writing. He eagerly asked what books Bonstetten had brought from England: his friend named them: on taking leave he begged him to send them to him, which he did.

I have mentioned his ambition to be of the

petit-conseil of Berne; but in this he was always disappointed. This disappointment, from the hands of those among whom he lived, sat like a nightmare on his heart, and pressed upon him in his long and solitary autumnal evenings. He was scarcely dead when another Haller was promoted to the place refused to this great man. No doubt the rivals of this new counsellor found themselves more at ease with him.* What a contrast was the social position of Haller at Berne with those of Göethe at Weimar, Ancillon at Berlin, and Muntu at Copenhagen! The genuine power—that of the soul—elevates to itself that which it surpasses; mean power, on the contrary, lowers to itself that which is superior to it.

The faults of Haller were those of the aristocracy which he courted, and of the time and place in which his youth was passed. His light was but the first dawn of the day which was about to open.

Bonstetten has given an amusing article in his "Recollections," about the late Pretender Charles Edward and his princess, known by the name of the Comtesse d'Albany; but the character of these personages is so well known that it would be tedious to repeat it. The Princess afterwards married Alfieri, and lastly Fabre, a painter. I remember her at Florence, in 1820, where she

* This is the great secret why moderate talents are so often more successful in the world than brilliant genius.

received English; but I did not take the trouble to attend on her, though she had the character of being gracious. Bonstetten, with his usual vanity and gallantry, had in his travels made love to her. About 1782, Alfieri, then a young unknown Italian, had accompanied her to the baths of Baden, in Switzerland, and was very amorous of her, which seems to have raised Bonstetten's jealousy.

In 1773, Bonstetten was presented to Cardinal de Bernis at Rome. Nothing less resembled his light poetry than his round person and slow walk. Having been the *protégé* of Madame de Pompadour, he became minister, and was then exiled; restored to favour in 1764; disgraced a second time, abandoned by France, and supported by Spain.

Bonstetten commenced his travels in Italy by Milan, where he was introduced to Comte Firmian the minister, who was in reality Viceroy of Lombardy. He was a tall man, round, with an air of intellectual dignity, which showed goodness at the bottom. The young Bernois was taken into favour, and invited three or four times a week to dine with him. There was little general conversation: one seemed to be in the presence of a sovereign; and when the Comte spoke, every one was silent. Firmian was respected and beloved at Milan; but the German rule is not pleasant to the Italians.

The German love of order is too hard for the passionate souls of the south, endowed with more elasticity than the Germans.

Firmian was the friend and protector of literature; he was himself a *savant*, and had collected a library of 40,000 volumes.

The society of Milan was a middle point between the south and the north. There was something of the German benevolence and French ease of conversation. At a ball of the Archduke, Bonstetten remarked that no Italian lady waltzed, and asked the reason of one of them:—"C'est," replied she, "que nous autres Italiennes nous en accoucherions neuf mois après."

In 1773, he was presented to Pope Clement XIV. Ganganelli, the Pope, received him very graciously, and they spoke of Italian literature. He said that strangers knew little but of the Italian poets, yet that they had good prose-writers, and that he had a great preference for the "Cortigiano" of Castiglione. The Pope was of middle height:—he had more the politeness of a monk than of a prince. At this time Rome was entirely occupied with the destruction of the order of Jesuits. The gentleness of manners and habits contrasted so strongly with the institutions, that there was not a country where they spoke and thought more freely of religion than at Rome. Bonstetten quitted Italy when he learned the death of Ganganelli. At the first report of his

decease, all the world believed him poisoned; but this report soon died away.

When at Naples, in 1774, he was presented to their Majesties. The King did not speak to strangers;—probably because he spoke bad Italian, and no French. He visited Caserté, to which the Court often retired. There he saw the King, sporting familiarly in the public place with the lowest of the rabble. He did not see the Queen; but he saw a young officer of the Guards, who was her favourite of the day. Bonstetten asked him how many predecessors he had: he said he did not know exactly; but he thought that he was the *thirty-second.*

Matthison first introduced Bonstetten to Madame Brun, who was the first cause of his sojourn in Denmark, followed by thirty years of abode at Geneva. Without Matthison, he had never thought of being an author. His life was unhappily at an end in Berne, revolutionized, and covered with hatred and darkness. He was introduced to Matthison by an accident. One of his cousins, an officer in the service of Holland, was departing to join his regiment. Bonstetten entered his carriage to accompany him a little way on his road. He accompanied him as far as Spire. His cousin deposited him at the inn there, where he learned that Madame Laroche, a celebrated German author whom he had seen at Berne, was at Spire: he ran to call upon her; she received him hospi-

tably, and would not permit him to return to the inn. The Rhine, in all its magnificence, gave dignity to the country round: it appeared a sort of fairy-land to Bonstetten.

Madame Laroche had on her table the poems of a young bard living at Heidelberg—it was Matthison, who had commenced his career by a beautiful poem on the Castle of Heidelberg. Bonstetten was enchanted, and expressed a desire to know the author. The day fixed for his departure there was a large company at dinner from Manheim: his chaise was at the door, when a lady proposed that they should accompany him to Heidelberg, to introduce him to Matthison. At Heidelberg, Matthison supped with them; but he was silent, and little in harmony with the amiable persons Bonstetten was about to quit. The next day the poet called on him. Friendship instantly came, like love, he knew not how. The music of two hearts was like the most delicious duet; they were inebriated. The next morning, Matthison carried him to view the source of the Walfbrun. How beautiful nature appears to us at the moment we are impressed with the first sentiment of friendship! Forty years afterwards, another beautiful lake became the witness of their last adieus at Rolle. In the north, friendship is a sort of tacit contract, which does not exist in the south. There is more or less friendship in all countries: but there is a tradition among the Germans of a wor-

ship of the God of Friendship. Bonstetten adds, that he had experienced friendship in the south; but the name of friend is not known and respected there as in the north.

Matthison, as tutor to the nephews of the Comte de Manteuffel, was unhappy at Heidelberg. He sometimes corresponded with Bonstetten. Four or five years afterwards he wrote that his physician told him he would not live if he remained any longer at that place. Bonstetten invited him to visit him at Berne; he made no answer: but he had given up his situation. In the summer of 1787, Bonstetten was living at a small campagne near the gates of Berne, which commanded a glorious view; when one fine day his servant informed him that a stranger wished to see him. It was Matthison, who, in the noble confidence of friendship, came to throw himself upon his hospitality. He was a poet in art as well as in words. Matthison, the morning after his arrival, went to the nearest mountain of Berne, called Gurton; there he composed his "Elisium." The delicious sentiment of his deliverance, and of a happiness quite new to him, inspired him to paint the arrival of a soul in the Elysian fields.

Bonstetten was then elected *bailli* of Nyon for six years. Matthison, now a member of his family, came to establish himself with him in one of the most beautiful situations of Europe. The ancient chateau of Nyon, with its old towers,

which on all sides looked on the most brilliant scenery of nature, seemed like the twelfth century come to look upon the eighteenth. The most beautiful corner of this castle was the solitary closet of Matthison, placed at the end of a long gallery. All the beauties of the lake, the movements of the gate and town, an immense horizon terminated by the vast extent of the Alps,—all was at the service of his poetry. Bonstetten delighted to recall the happiness of his friend, who enjoyed the sentiment of his liberty in the bosom of friendship, in the midst of the most beautiful and animated nature.

"The beauties of nature," says Bonstetten "are not felt, except they are in harmony with the sentiments which have dominion over us at the moment the prospects are presented to us The manner of building of uncivilized ages proves that our ancestors had little regard to these beauties. Children are not sensible of them, and we ourselves are affected differently by them in different humours. Love, friendship, independence, are all in harmony with these beauties self-love, vanity, avarice, are in dissonance with them. The unhappy is consoled by the view of a beautiful landscape when it recalls to him some object he has lost, and is in harmony with this theme of his regrets."

As to Matthison, the sentiment of liberty was was most dear to his heart. Liberty is only a

happiness when we know how to employ it: it oppresses the idle. For Matthison it was friendship, love—above all, the happiness of thinking and feeling while he saw his talents and glory augment. Thus could the aspect of nature have charms for him.

Bonstetten saw little of his friend. Having the government of the frontier of three countries in revolution, and seeing the country which he governed agitated by the mania, he was incessantly occupied by the movements which he saw rising around him. This sort of toil, which carried his attention upon great masses and on events of the highest importance, had more attractions for him than those details which dry up the thoughts. In the midst of these discords he had the happiness to live on good terms with his neighbours and those whom he governed.

What delight to see by his side a friend,—and a friend such as Matthison, with whom he could escape from the prose of life, and enter sometimes into the poetry of the infancy which he knew so well how to sing! In their solitary walks they flew sometimes to the waters of a rivulet, where they amused themselves in reading their future destinies.—"See there the calm of the waters," said he; "is it happiness or *ennui?*" "Oh," said Matthison, "it is better below, where the calm is followed by a strong current." "That is

better," rejoined he; "and farther on, see these falls of water upon the hard rocks;—that is ill, but it will pass away: and below is the beautiful lake, where the waves of the torrent will have nobler destinies."

Sometimes they went to distract their thoughts in the fine wood of Prangins, which throws its promontory boldly into the Lake. There Matthison, in his beautiful poem of "The Lake of Geneva," places his tomb, when he says:—"Dans ce lieu solitaire, où l'onde caresse le rivage, où la pensée muette se plait à écouter les pas légers de la nature; là, à l'ombre du chêne s'elevera ma tombe. Bientôt on se dira dans le village, qu'à la pâle lueur de la lune au bruit léger, comme le bourdonnement lointain de l'abeille, le berger a cru entendre les chants du tombeau."

The humour of Matthison changed from serious to gay, but was principally serious. He passed entire days when not a word could be extorted from him even in answer: these days of poetic fermentation were always followed by some beautiful poem. In the morning, when he came forth from his closet, he enjoyed the beautiful view: then he walked till an hour before dinner, when he generally took a lonely walk with Bonstetten: after dinner he escaped privately to enjoy the poetry of love with some amiable young female; but he was so secret that he never confided any

thing of this to his friend: this, perhaps, arose from his habits of silence, to which he accustomed the management of his mind.

What a contrast between the severity of mind of Matthison and the melancholy of Gray! Eighteen years before his residence at Nyon, Bonstetten, as I have mentioned, passed some months at Cambridge with Gray, almost in the same intimacy as with Matthison; but with this difference, that Gray was thirty years older than him, and Matthison sixteen years younger. His love for English poetry, which he read with Gray, had so far subdued his gaiety that the difference of their ages was not perceived by them. He lodged in a coffee-house near Pembroke Hall; Gray lived shut up in a sort of cloister, which still retained the character of the fifteenth century. The town of Cambridge, with its solitary colleges, was but the reunion of convents, where mathematics and other sciences took the form and custom of the middle age. Beautiful convents, with long and silent cloisters, solitary figures in black gowns, young lords turned into monks with square caps, and every where the recollection of monks, by the side of the glory of Newton! None of the frivolities of life mixed with the studies of these bookworms in human form. Knowledge sometimes prospers in the desert of the heart: such Bonstetten represents Cambridge in 1769. What a contrast was the life of Gray at Cambridge with

that of Matthison at Nyon! Gray, in condemning himself to live at Cambridge, forgot that the genius of the poet languishes in the dryness of the heart.

Bonstetten used to remark, that the poetical genius of Gray was so extinguished in the sombre abode of Cambridge, that the recollection of his poetry was odious to him. He never permitted him to speak of it;—when he cited some of his verses to him, Gray was as silent as an obstinate child. He sometimes said to him, "Will you answer me?" But not a word could be extorted from him. He passed every evening with him from five till midnight: they read together Shakspeare, (whom he adored,) Dryden, Pope, Milton, &c.; and their conversations, like those of friendship, were never exhausted. He gave an account to Gray of his life and his country: but Gray's life was shut to him; he never would speak of himself. It seemed as if with Gray there was an impassable abyss between the present and the past. When Bonstetten made an effort to enter on it, dark clouds came over Gray's countenance. Bonstetten believed that Gray had never been in love; the word was an enigma to him. Thence came a misery of heart, which made a contrast with his ardent and profound imagination: and thus this faculty, instead of making the happiness of his life, became its torment. Gray had liveliness of spirit, and melan-

choly in his character. But this melancholy was an unsatisfied want in his sensibility. With Gray it arose from the sort of life led by an ardent spirit, obscured by the arctic pole of Cambridge.

The reader must remember that this is Bonstetten's character of Gray;—not mine. It is highly curious as drawn from personal acquaintance and intimacy. It appears to me in some respects mistaken. I do not at all believe that Gray forgot his poetry; or that the remembrance of it was odious to him. He probably thought that Bonstetten did not know enough of the language to be a proper judge of it. What he says about Gray's reserve, as to the history of his own life, is probably more just. The misfortunes of his infancy dwelt like a nightmare on his heart. The accuracy of the observations about the evil effects of Gray's residence at Cambridge is doubtful. I am inclined to believe that Gray could not altogether have found any other abode so well suited to him. His habits were solitary: he had here inexhaustible libraries, and many other conveniences and luxuries, which his small income could not otherwise have procured. It is true that the Cambridge studies were alien to his taste, and that he was not popular among the *moines noirs:* I do not say that he always rose entirely above these mortifications;—but in what situation can we be free from mortifications? After all, melancholy must not always be mistaken for

unhappiness, though the lively Bonstetten mistook it. Read Gray's letters; could one so employed,—with such exquisite taste,—with such profound erudition, be unhappy? Then see how he employed his summer tours;—and then again how free he was from the ordinary cares of life! Independent, peaceable, — provided for, — respected by his friends,—admired by the public, — and with the consciousness (for I cannot suppose him to have been unconscious) of having written the most perfect Elegy in all modern poetry, I cannot altogether think that he was comparatively unhappy. One thing I do regret, and blame him for;—that he wrote so little.—But I must not allow myself to go farther into Gray's character here; I have talked much with Bonstetten about him, but I confess I could not get any additional light from him.* Bonstetten was sprightly, imaginative, and enthusiastic; but I think not profound. He was more like a Frenchman than a German Swiss; I cannot guess how he could be suited to Gray.

To return to Matthison;—after two years of happiness passed at Nyon, to become independent, he took the place of tutor, with his friend Schérer at Lyons. There he composed his "Années de mon Enfance," and wrote his beautiful

* When he received the news of his great friend's death, Bonstetten told me he was the more shocked, because Gray had promised to make him a visit *en Suisse* that very summer.

poem on "The Lake of Geneva."* It was at Lyons that he made the acquaintance of the celebrated Madame Brun, who, travelling with her husband and children, came afterwards to pass a year at Geneva, where Bonstetten visited her with a letter of introduction from Matthison. "The happy destiny of my whole life," says he, "allied me in friendship successively with the most distinguished beings — with Gray, John Müller, and afterwards with Matthison, and Madame Brun. My soul, carried on the wings of the heart, traversed peaceably all the successive aspects of a life agitated by a series of revolutions."

Matthison, having returned with the Schérer family to the banks of the Leman, made the acquaintance of a pretty and amiable German lady, attached to the Princess of Dessau. After having written some charming poetry upon her, he finished by marrying her. Then he came with all his household to live with Bonstetten at Rome, where he established himself subsequent to his prefecture of Nyon. But hear a trait of his poetical character; it was at the commencement of the winter of 1794. Matthison came to Bonstetten with an air rather embarrassed, and said, "I am going to take a tour!"—"And where are you going?" —"To Copenhagen with Madame Brun." —"And your wife?"— "She will remain here

* See this noticed in the Notes to my own poem on "The Lake of Geneva," 1831, vol. II.

till my return." Bonstetten thought he dreamed; —but he took his departure. But just arrived at Copenhagen, to the utter astonishment of Madame Brun, he said he must leave her: he left her, and returned to Berne! In the spring he went with his wife, and established himself at Magdebourg.

In the end, Matthison was divorced from his wife—Bonstetten did not know why. Separated and without children, he then entered into the service of the Princess of Dessau. Bonstetten went to the Diet of Tessin, and, finding himself in Italy, met again with Matthison and Madame Brun. They there passed a delicious day at the campagne of Pliny, near the Lake of Como. What happiness the interview of three friends near the monument of the most amiable sage of antiquity!

At the epoch of the storm which revolutionized Switzerland, Bonstetten in 1798 took refuge in Denmark. After two years' residence in that hospitable country, he settled himself at Geneva for the education of his children. Matthison, loaded with the bounties of the King of Wirtemberg, went to settle at Stutgard.

It was at Stutgard that he found the completion of his happiness by an alliance with Louise, coming as a rose from the gardens of Wörlitz, where her father was chief gardener. How much happiness or misery depends on these unions: two persons thus united may be a paradise, or a hell, to each other! Matthison was in the way of

this happiness with his Louise, when a few years afterwards he lost her. After this he did but vegetate, and, having nothing more to love in this world, he joined his Louise in the other. Without friendship and love, the world is a desert. How large a part of mankind make nothing but *interest* the motive of their actions; and by interest they mean something *material*—and without perceiving, that above matter is an immortal soul! To love and to think are the gifts not of matter, but of soul: they constitute the glory and the happiness of man: they made the one and the other the destiny of Matthison.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A pause in the composition of these memoirs—The time not lost—The work is drawing to a close—Autobiography should lay open the heart—Author's anxiety as to the success of his task—Works of this kind, if frank, almost always interesting—Active lives not the best subjects for such books—Memoirs of meditative minds most amusing and instructive—"Rousseau's Confessions" intensely interesting—The heart more to be depended upon than the head—The best works the joint result of all the faculties—To give a character of oneself, a perilous task—Author's pursuit of literature unmercenary—An author can analyze his own mind better than another—Author's consistency of opinion and sentiment—Rapidity—Prevalent notions of poetical imagination—Flowery language and unnatural combinations—Buckram strength—Psychology—Montaigne's rambling manner—Love of poetry—The public taste is for stimulants—Authors of moral eloquence and wisdom never finally neglected—Authors must depend on their own judgment—Mock humility—The author has no just cause of complaint of late criticisms on him—Many of the author's writings little known—His inconsistencies—His morbidness—His alternate silence and impetuosity—These expositions justified—Retreat had been safer—His *cacoëthes scribendi*—His rapid pen—Traits in his writings—Deficiency of facts and anecdotes—Internal exposition more proper for autobiography—Johnson's opinion that the bent of genius is produced by accidental circumstances—Cowley—The compositions of original authors betray their own character—A mean folly in poets to wish to appear men of the world—Byron—Private letters are not the best materials for an author's life—Gray's Life by Mason—Gibbon's Autobiography—His character—His genius far inferior to Burke—The author justifies his own definition of the imaginative faculty—Homer, Byron, Shakspeare.

Some months have passed during which I have paused upon this work. I have not been idle.

My mind is ever busy, and my heart too. No year passes without adding something to my knowledge, or at least to the mellowness and extent of my thoughts. These volumes are drawing to a close, and I now imagine that I could have said a great deal which I have omitted.

I consider that autobiography does nothing unless it lays open the heart with frankness. But what, it will be asked, is the proof of frankness? It is the breath of life, which exhales from the language, as the fragrant incense rises from the freshness of the natural soil when turned up by the plough. Does this ever come forth from a manured and artificial earth?

I look back on the task I have performed with some anxiety and doubt. I anticipate all the prejudices and ill-humoured comments to which I have exposed myself; but I will not be driven from my claim to this merit—that every thing has been written with good faith. It has always been my principle and practice not to think what I should write, but to write what I have thought.

I do not recollect to have read an autobiography of any one, however obscure, who opened his heart, that was not amusing and instructive. A superabundance of vanity only makes such works trivial and disgusting; but where vanity works it is a false light, and not the disclosure of the heart. Vanity is a disguise of the heart, as surely every one will allow.

It would seem that they who have led the most active and eventful lives, must be furnished with the best materials for this sort of composition; but experience does not prove this to be the case. An active life allows less time to think or feel. There are exceptions—such as Lord Clarendon; but they are very rare. In the whole range of books of amusement, the autobiographies of meditative minds are to me the most interesting; and a few of them the most full of important knowledge. Whatever faults there may be in "Rousseau's Confessions"—and some of them are appalling—these form one of the most intensely curious works in modern literature. I am aware that this is no argument to show that the expositions of a minor mind will be so.

It is a very commonly-received opinion, that writings which address the understanding are more valuable than those which address the heart. I entertain an opposite conviction. The heart, when unsophisticated, is commonly the best guide. The best conclusions of a subtle and ingenious reason are uncertain: sometimes the *data* are imperfect; sometimes the logic is erroneous. The heart and conscience never vary. But no literary composition was ever sublime or beautiful, which did not partake of all the faculties of the mind and heart,—of imagination, sentiment, intellect, sagacity, and even memory, if that be a separate faculty; which I think it is.

I cannot but be fully sensible how delicate and perilous a task it is to give any character of oneself or one's own qualities. Yet can this be avoided by one who writes autobiography? In these closing chapters I may be expected to give a summary of the features I would wish to convey from the long rambling pages of matter which have preceded:—now that I have arrived at this point, I am inclined to shrink from the attempt. No one will take me at my word for any praise of myself; on the other hand, it is my duty not to be suicidal.

So far I may venture to say, that no man ever pursued literature through a long life with more fervour or with less mercenary views. If I had been more mercenary I should have been more popular, because publishers would have had a greater interest in pushing the circulation of my works. I presume that almost every author, who publishes on his own account, is a great loser—at least in money. He has indeed some advantages; he writes with more freedom and sincerity.

Can one analyze his own mind better than another? I think he can. I mean that one who has been habituated to turn his thoughts and observations inward, can. From the age of eighteen I have drawn from my own sources and a keen watchfulness of my own emotions. The poems which I published at twenty-two prove that I thought and felt then in the same tenor as I think

and feel now. But I could not write then with so much facility as I write now,—it cost me much more toil; and I persuade myself that my compositions are now more mellow. Rapidity is now charged against me as a fault; but I cannot feel that the charge is just. I do not blame others for a different mode; I only ask them to leave me to my own.

I think that there are certain critics who mistake what is the true principle of poetical imagination. I continue to contend that it does not lie in flowery language, gaudy images, and unnatural combinations; but that it lies in invented exemplifications of high, and beautiful, and affecting truths. Under this definition I have a calm confidence that I am not deficient in true poetical imagination. This claim will be deemed by many very arrogant. But I observe that many think the plainness of my language, and the absence of attempts to surprise by marvels and monstrosities, a proof of my want of poetical invention. I set myself against all buckram strength, artificial polish, and technical beauties. Poetry is something better than an art: its great charm is to draw forth the secrets of the bosom, especially its moral secrets.

I delight in psychology; my curiosity is ever awake upon it. One of my favourite authors is Montaigne. That rambling manner, which many condemn, is my delight. But, above all, I love

poetry the best, provided it be of that simple and plaintive sort which excites our passionate and moral sympathies. I have little pleasure in the great mass of what is called poetry; but I am quite sure that true poetry is the best of all instructors. It teaches us to look upon the face of nature with a pious and glowing gratitude, and to associate with it all those feelings which most soften and improve the heart. What is material is of no high value, except so far as it is connected with mind.

This is not the first taste with the great body of readers: they want something more stimulant by the force of novelty and wonder. But this by its very nature ceases to please in a short time; and therefore reputation so founded never lasts. *Sed magna est veritas, et prævalebit.* It rarely happens that fame rapidly obtained is enduring. The literary reputations, which survive the lives of authors for twenty years, are very rare; in very many cases the authors outlive their own celebrity. They have grasped, as Johnson says, at "a deciduous laurel."

I believe that there is no instance [illegible] the writings of an author of moral eloquence and wisdom have been finally neglected. These the malignity of criticism or calumny has never been able to crush;—it has often cast a temporary veil over them. Yet it would be affectation to say, that even the most unjust criticism is unavailing to

give pain to the person attacked. I confess it agitates me deeply for the moment, but I soon recover from it.

I have received many hints that I ought to have forborne the subject I have now treated: but I know that he who is led by the opinions and advices of others trusts to very treacherous guides. All that I have now written must take the chance of its own intrinsic foundation, good or bad; by that it must stand or fall. Flattery will not help it; detraction will not throw it down. If I have claimed any merit which does not belong to me, I am quite sure that it will injure instead of exalting me. But a mock humility is but a mean and fraudulent pretence. Such mock humility is the strongest proof of internal self-sufficiency—a fault which certainly does not belong to me. I am anxious to cultivate that self-complacence, without which there can be no happiness; but I find it difficult to do so. A calm and unassuming courage is a moral virtue.

I have no right to complain that criticism has been altogether unkind to me, especially of late. But I have struggled in the literary world for half a century; and if I have gained any notice it has been slow in coming, and sometimes coldly and scantily granted at last. It is said that many of my writings are little known; and this is partly attributed to the manner of their publication. The truth is, that among my numerous deficiencies is

a want of worldly management and cunning, and that I am the worst of all bargain-makers. I am aware that I am, like half mankind, full of inconsistencies;—and while I cannot deny that I have always too ardently loved distinction, I have been very unskilful in the arts to gain it,

I am morbid, shy, easily repulsed, soon offended, violent to resent, and rapid to forgive; ductile; too easily diverted from my own resolves, and surrendering up my judgment against my own conviction; fond of solitude; overcome by the bustle and arrogance of society; and overset, silenced, and stultified by rude contradiction; often not firm enough to speak when I ought; and when I do speak, too impetuous and dogmatical; losing the time to press my answers or replies; and then vexing myself that I prevent the opportunity of giving the crushing response which quivered on my lips. "*Cui bono,*" it will be observed, "all these expositions? To whom, except to yourself, are they of any importance?" I can only answer that I like to read such pictures of character in others, even though as obscure as myself; and therefore suppose that others may have the same taste as I have. Besides, if I am spoken of at all, I wish to be spoken of correctly. It might have been better for me if—

> Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
> My sober wishes ne'er had learn'd to stray;
> But in the cool sequester'd vale of life
> Had kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

I am inclined to believe that not only the safest but the happiest course of life is in retreat: but I have long outstepped this; and, alas, *vestigia nulla retrorsum!* I am quite sure that I shall now be misunderstood if I am silent: probably I shall be misunderstood, say what I will,—but not equally misunderstood.

I cannot deny that I have the *cacoëthes scribendi*, let my enemies make what use they will of the admission. I know not how I should employ myself without it: it occupies all my best hours: it teaches me to examine my own heart, and accustoms me to a thousand intellectual pleasures which I should otherwise miss. While I am writing, I may truly say that hours fly like minutes. To write is no toil to me, because I always write *currente calamo*. But then are they not idle words which I write? I hope not. Is no moral truth elicited?—no flying sentiment embodied?—no shadowy idea arrested to which the reader will return in his sober hours, to compare it with his own sympathies?—no generalization?—none of that spirituality, which spreads through all space, and extends through all time? which, instead of individual, is universal.

There are readers who will cry out for more facts and more anecdotes. I am not sure that these may not be better done by another than by an autobiographer, whose superior knowledge must lie in the picture of the mind and heart, and not of

outward facts. Moreover, facts and anecdotes once told and once read lose their zest. There is indeed a sort of prominent curiosity that loves to dive into secret history; but when it ceases to be secret, it has no longer any interest. In the external and material incidents of life the greatest genius differs little from a common person:—the difference lies in the spiritual qualities of his being. I have been in company with many men of high intellect, who in outward appearance and manners did not, at least on a superficial view, differ at all from ordinary people. Yet their minds and feelings must have been as unlike as light and darkness.

If an autobiographer relates those facts and circumstances, which must have occurred to him in common with the mass of mankind, he deserts his peculiar province for trite and uninstructive topics. His business is with his own individual opinions and emotions. Such facts indeed as may be supposed to have given a bent and colour to the genius are of a different value, as when Johnson relates of Cowley that the Fairy Queen was obtruded on his early childhood. Yet it is not a very happy illustration of the critic doctrine; for no two poets could be more dissimilar than Spenser and Cowley. I am inclined to believe that the bent of genius is exclusive of outward circumstances; otherwise, how should Milton and Gray, both cradled in the heart of crowded London, have

been so enthusiastically fond of rural imagery, and so happy in describing it?

All original writers of high poetry have let out their own character in their compositions, even where they least intended it. They cannot wear a mask—their emotions cast it off from their face. It is quite impossible that a person of strong poetical genius should not be a person of extreme sensibility. Unfortunately persons of these qualities have sometimes the mean and foolish vanity to desire to appear people of the world, which they ought, on the contrary, to scorn. I am sorry to say that Byron, powerful, brilliant, and lofty as he was, had this degrading fault. It often breaks out in his letters, and in most of the conversations recorded of him. Just in proportion as one cultivates the craft of the worldling, he will damp the noblest and most inventive intellect.

Many suppose that an author's private letters will answer all the purposes of autobiography. I do not think so. They are not sufficiently calculated to produce generalization. If addressed to intimate friends, they omit many things as known to them already, which yet the public may wish to know. If to strangers, they are commonly formal, reserved, and individual in their subjects. They may form part of the materials of memoirs; but a very limited part. Thus the life of Gray is very scanty and unsatisfactory, because it consists of scarce any thing but letters. Mason's part in the

poet's memoir is very meagre and dry. I do not think that Gray would have had nerve to write his own life. He had a timid and unmanly fastidiousness. How much we should have lost which interests us in Gibbon's character, if he had not left memorials by his own pen! Yet he is not very eloquent nor very natural in those memorials: he rather appears a fine gentleman of the early part of the reign of George III., in a court-dress. He is placid and ceremonious in his bag, his ruffles, and his velvet coat; gently throwing out his studied and polished words; a little piquant and epigrammatic, while rapping his snuff-box and smiling with civility and self-satisfaction. He has no bursts of imagination; no effusions of glowing sentiment; always the philosophic oracle; always criticizing, and balancing, and commenting. He is too often like one of the trim gardens of extreme artifice, described by Bacon and Sir William Temple. But he was a great man in defiance of these faults: his research, and erudition, and power of digesting, methodizing, and condensing his infinite materials, produced a stupendous work, which is secure of immortality. He had certainly less of brilliance than many of his contemporaries. He was *longo intervallo* inferior to Burke in exuberance, in originality, in sagacity, in eloquence, in illustrative fancy, in every ingredient of a great mind.

It will be said, that I put the imaginative fa-

culty higher than sober minds will concede to me; and at the same time that I bound its proper nature within limits too strait. My business is to speak with sincerity my own individual convictions, whether right or wrong. If I am so cowardly as to abide by other men's opinions, I had better not take up the pen. The view I take of this faculty is borne out by the practice of all the great poets from Homer to Byron. There are numberless temporary meteors to whom it does not apply. The more accurately that imagination exemplifies real life—but noble and intellectual life —the more perfect is its inventive power. It is vain to hope to arrive at the happy results of this faculty by artifice, toil, and polish. It is all native power, and nothing else. It can be felt rather than analysed. It is always moral, and always touches certain chords of the heart, which instantly tremble with responsive music. The most marvellous example of this is the first of all poets—Shakspeare.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Anxiety at taking farewell—Milton—Passion and prejudice—Cumberland's autobiography—Author's illness when last in England—Gleig—Simons—Effects of old age on the mind and heart—Beauty of nature—Love of poetry—Decreased relish for books—Author's present habits—Want of self-possession—Johnson's love to dispel charms—His mingled character—Satire more popular than praise—Indiscriminate praise—Author no nursling of fortune—His ill success and adversity—His unwise love of the vicinage of his nativity—His unhappiness at school—His abode at Denton—The time he spent in parliament—Charge against him of aristocratical prejudices—Peerage claim—Necessity of the protection of the common-law—Sir Robert Dudley and the Star-Chamber—Origin of the author's family—It is dastardly to abandon just pretensions—Peerage not a bauble—Author's studies involve legislation and political economy—The Lords jealous as to their claim of jurisdiction over peerages—The Crown afraid to interfere—Present state of the peerage—Literature—Author's study of his own mind—Criticisms upon him—His dislike of flowery language—Rapidity of composition—Scott, Johnson, &c.—Value of freshness of ideas—Artificiality condemned—Secondary genius—Imaginative invention—Modern novels—Ephemeral publications—Desire of enduring fame—Author's diffidence at the close of his work—Acquired calmness—Force and freshness—The author's confidence that he has not misrepresented—His forbearance to expose many wrong-doers—Common biographies too vague and indiscriminate—Genius is never tame—Mingled qualities of good and evil in the noblest characters—Author's aim to embody in language elevated thoughts and refined sentiments—His hope to strengthen young minds against the fears of age—Magnanimity of moral courage—Little passions—His character of himself—The character given by his enemies—Conclusion.

When we are about to take farewell, after a long series of intellectual intercourse, an anxiety hangs

over us, and the more we wish to say, the more we are oppressed with silence. Many have written an autobiography; but few have had the courage to let them appear during their own lives. I have written with sincerity, and therefore I prepare myself to hear calmly all the consequences. If I hope good report, I know that I cannot escape evil report also. Tastes will differ: I have met with many who confessed they could not admire or approve even Milton. And how many passions are there to cloud and warp the judgment!

If I have set up principles of literary excellence, which many will deem too severe, it will be said that they prove the greater presumption in entering the course myself. But he who is spurred on by the love of glory, must resolve to run many hazards. There are multitudes who will resort to the old proverb, that *omne obscurum pro magnifico est;* and therefore that nothing is so imprudent as to unveil oneself, as it probably will expose one's own weakness or barrenness. But this is a base and not very profound mode of thinking. I suppose the justification will be, that it is better not to be thought of at all than to be thought ill of. There are many fastidious, and some virtuous minds, which are more fearful of blame than hopeful of applause.

I remember that when Richard Cumberland published his own memoirs, all the English world read them with eagerness. I was not very well pleased with them myself: I thought them faint

and affected. But many years have passed since I have looked into them. Having passed the greater part of the last sixteen years on the Continent, I have had access to few English books. I was indeed, as I have stated, in England for an interval of twenty-eight months, from June, 1826, to October, 1828; but during that time I fell into such a state of illness and gloom that I could read nothing, though surrounded by an ample library at Lee Priory. I was much reproached for giving way to melancholy, but it was a disease which I could not overcome. A narrow neighbourhood of unliterary people was ill suited to the enlarged habits I had indulged on the Continent. Almost the only social enjoyment I felt was at the table of my literary friend Gleig.* I must except my hospitable and aged friend Simons, the rector of our parish of Ickham.

As little space remains for me, I am in doubt with what selection of topics I ought to occupy it. Perhaps the most proper conclusion is the present condition of my mind and moral feelings.

I can say then with sincerity, that I have not found old age to harden my heart, or weaken the activity of my mind. I am confident that it has mellowed my intellect, and enlarged my candour and benevolence. I have conquered the passions of envy and jealousy, and I have learned to de-

* Now appointed Chaplain of Chelsea Hospital.

spise wealth, show, and luxury. I have borne deprivations with fortitude, and cease to wish for any thing beyond a competence. I have not lost my calmness or cheerfulness beneath frightful and almost incredible injustice and wrong. I am more delighted with the grandeur and beauty of nature even than in the glow and enthusiasm of my youth. I love good poetry as much; but I can less endure that which is mediocre. I do not feel that my imaginative faculties are more languid, though I am conscious that the details of my memory have very much faded. I do not experience less pleasure in the employment of my pen; but unfortunately my relish for books is very much decayed, and I now read lazily and inattentively. On the other hand, I rely more on my own resources, and do not find their abundance to fail me.

I have no self-possession in company, and therefore my conversation is confused, abrupt, and sometimes contradictory:—while the contradiction of others so overcomes me, that I lose my power of reply, when a ready reply suggests itself to my mind; and when the opportunity is gone, I vex myself that I let folly, ignorance, or pertness, conquer or silence me. I am so morbid that I scarce ever retire from society self-satisfied.

The nature of my intellect, and temperament, and disposition, has made me essentially given up to literature through the whole of my long life, and not so by accident, toil, and art. It has been

my daily food, and I could not exist without it. In the occasional depressions of my spirits, during which I have lost my self-confidence, I have submitted to amuse myself by the humbler tasks of editorial labours, which I consider to have been a waste of my precious time, though not unuseful as a pioneer in the forgotten walks of English literature, but for which I think that minds of a drier cast would have done as well or better. If I had set out with compilation, censurers might more reasonably have suspected me of want of original powers; but my first publication was a volume of poems, at the age of twenty-one; and that volume every candid critic will pronounce to be of the same cast as the best of my later compositions. My taste was then the same as it is now:—I loved the same models, and endeavoured to drink of the same spirit.

I always delighted to take ideal views of the human character, and to embody those views into individual life; associating them with scenery, sentiment, passion, and an imaginary world. At the same time the biography of actual beings of eminent qualities was not less attractive to me. On these it was my joy to comment by the lamp of fancy, and with a sympathy of bosom, which I hope was always glowing or plaintive.

There are those who may have said that I sometimes threw a halo round these characters which did not belong to them:—rude censurers, who

pretended to conjure up the searching blast and blackening cloud. Alas, how many mistake malignity for strength, and spleen and envy for truth and wisdom!

Johnson has been a favourite biographer with the public; but it was his aim and his pleasure to tear away the veil and dissipate the spell. Johnson had an acute and gigantic understanding; but little imagination, and still less sensibility. I am afraid that his piquant bitterness was among the attractions which common readers found in him. He examined the personal characters of those of whom he wrote with a dissecting knife, which searched for inward deformities and morbid humours. He was himself a mingled character;—he had great moral virtues, but also great and repulsive faults. His unfeeling rudeness to others; his sensitive non-endurance of contradiction himself, were scarcely pardonable moral failures. His childish jealousy was a contemptible littleness; his superstition was folly; his pedantic pomp was often disgusting, if not laughable: but his keenness was mighty, and his discrimination like a flash of lightning.

I have gone upon an opposite principle and opposite feeling in such biographies as I have written. I have been guided by a disposition to admire rather than to hate; and the consequence has been that many have thought this love weakness, and these lights delusion. I should have

been more popular if I had been more satirical and ill-tempered. In conversation none is so acceptable as the satirist, and none deemed so witty as the detractor.

I admit that fulsome and indiscriminate praise is sickening and disgusting: it does no good to him on whom it is poured out, but rather injures him. It proves the want of sense, or want of sincerity, of him who is guilty of it. As to want of sincerity, I think it a heinous and unpardonable sin. There is scarce any vice which I am so little inclined to forgive as hypocrisy. It has been excused as a homage paid to virtue. I say that it is a homage paid to base self-interest. When Horace says

Sume superbiam quæsitam meritis,

it is a bold self-confidence, which comes well from him; but I am suspicious that the public will not endure it from so humble and feeble a being as I am. There it stands however, and I have ventured to abide by it.

I have not been a nursling of fortune;—my life has been a life of difficulties, dangers, misfortunes, oppressions, wrongs, spoliations, disinherisons, and defeats. "Coarser heads" and "cheeks of sorrier grain," have every where mounted over me. I have miscalculated my means, and thrown away my strength. I have suffered worldly craft to overreach me, and the wiles of villanous conspi-

racy to succeed. The dull and grasping have carried their frauds against me by hard, and unimpressible, and blind pig-headedness. My ductility, and carelessness, and *distraitness* (if I may use the word), have contributed to all these evils. Family intrigues of my own generation—to confess a truth which many will censure me for disclosing—have added to these bars in the way of my success in life. Even on "the altars of my household gods" have I been sacrificed. If I had gone more afield early in life, I might have escaped this. I had too unwise and incontrollable a fondness for the spots of my nativity and their vicinage. I confess it with shame; it was a feebleness of mind, for which I cannot forgive myself.

But there have been unlucky events in my life, over which no wisdom or courage of mine could have had any command or sway.

From the moment I went to school, at the age of eight years and a half, I was unhappy; and nine years of struggle amid all the roughnesses of a school-life never hardened me. I never could acquire the self-possession which is necessary to make a worldly being. I attribute it to morbid and excessive sensitiveness, which has not even now entirely subsided. My life has been altogether passed in domestic solitude; though not entirely, without occasional emergence into the world and public affairs. In those eighteen years which I

spent in the venerable old mansion of Denton, I was devoted to the enthusiasm of literature and literary labour, whence I drank a delirious oblivion of all my troubles. I had then a buoyant mind, and still cherished golden hopes: scarce one of them has been fulfilled. Perhaps the six happiest years of my life were those I spent in parliament, 1812 to 1818; there I was received kindly, though, from a timidity in speaking sufficiently often, I did not do a tenth of what I ought to have done. No one becomes an adequate speaker till he rises with sufficient frequency to gain an entire self-possession. I always waited, and waited with a beating bosom till the moment was lost. Even then I lived amid storms, and battled with overwhelming waves which surrounded me on all sides, and dashed over my head: still I did not sink in "the remorseless deep." Here I am yet with my faculties alive, and my strength not utterly gone.

Among the charges which I am well aware will continue to be made against me are my aristocratical prejudices, and my pride of ancestry. As to the facts, I stand upon history and the law of the land. Let them who will forego this protection and security: I will not. A judge, a jury, and the common law of our ancestors, are my anchor. Are there to be found beings so stultified as to be willing to resort back to the arbitrary proceedings of a Star-Chamber jurisdiction? Look

how Sir Robert Dudley was used when he claimed to be legitimate, and to be entitled to the peerage and vast estates of the dukedom of Northumberland. Remember Kenilworth! Are there those who will deny the male stock from which I am derived? Then they must refer their own arbitrary and prejudiced opinion to legal evidence. I will not suffer myself to be at their cruel mercy. The peerage I claim only mounts up to the year 1554, but historic evidence will establish that my male stock is baronial from the Conquest; ascending, as I will satisfy any general jurist and European genealogist, to Johannes De Burgo (Monoculus) founder also of the House of De Burgh, and ten other branches of ancient peerage, either English or Irish, from all the chief of which I am also descended in the female line. This John De Burgo is said, in the common peerages, to have been of the House of Charlemagne; but whether they mean by the male or female line, they do not say. This great baron stands in Dugdale the first among the existing male stocks of the peerage; and if the modern genealogists be accurate in calling him son of John Earl of Comyn in Normandy, and assigning for one of his sons, Harlowen, who married the Conqueror's mother, and was father of Odo Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, and Robert Earl of Mortaine and Cornwall; it stands positively the first in precedence even of the Conqueror's peers. My

descent in the female line from all the old baronage will be found deduced in my "Stemmata Illustria."

If, under these circumstances, I were so dastardly as not to laugh at modern peerages, even the proudest of them, I should deserve all the contempt which could be thrown upon me. Perhaps I should not have dwelt so much, and so anxiously on this subject for the last thirty years, had not my just rights been hitherto defeated by an incompetent tribunal, which assuredly has no legal jurisdiction.

"What but a bauble is a peerage?" say the pseudo-pretenders to philosophic wisdom. I will tell them what it is. It is the power and privilege of taking a part in legislation and public affairs. And this to a man of my pursuits and habits, is no light power or privilege. I have intensely studied political economy, — and, above all, the Poor Laws, one of the great measures which most requires amendment at the present day; and I should have felt it a duty to take an active part in those concerns. I shall be answered, "The press is open to you." I reply, "There are many points on which the press is unavailing, except as the medium of parliamentary debates. All read the journals; few read political pamphlets—especially on political economy. I well know the finesse which is at the bottom of all this denial of the appeal to a le-

gal tribunal: and might has hitherto prevailed against right. The pitiful use which was made in the case of my brother, when, in 1803, he was outvoted in a Committee of Privileges, is too outrageously unjust not to fill every honest, generous, and enlightened heart with indignation. I believe that nearly half the peerage has been absolutely created since the right of heritage fell on my brother in 1789: and, O! what sort of men have been among those creations? Among those who formed the majority of the peers who voted against my brother, a great part were peers who had obtained their patent many years after the proceedings of the claim had commenced; and two had actually taken their seats only a few days. There were only two old peers on this opposing side,—the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Suffolk,—both long gone to their fathers. Both had themselves inherited, by a long collateral descent.

But as there is a general complaint that I return to this subject too often, I will forbear to say more.

I return to literature; — a much better and more acceptable subject. But I shall not insist with equal boldness on my pretensions in this way. I will say with undeniable certainty, that I continually turn my anxious observation inward to appreciate my own intellectual faculties and moral dispositions. I am aware that it would be

impossible to divest myself of partialities; but still I think that I can arrive nearer at the truth in some respects than others. Though some of the criticisms on me may have been more favourable than I deserve, others have assuredly been more disparaging than just. It seems to me that the simplicity and nakedness which I have adopted upon principle, have been mistaken for want of force and originality. I do not like flowery language or artificial polish. I do not admit them to be proofs of splendid power or true genius. Wherever the language overlays the thought, it is a vicious mantle,—and almost always sought to cover internal weakness or deformity. Whoever relies upon thought, will scorn adventitious ornaments as incumbrances. They are worse than useless; they would impede his progress. I dislike all ideas or sentiments which are far-fetched:—if they are not easily found, they probably are not true. Whether all our best writers have written with rapidity, is more than I will undertake to say: we know that Scott did so; and we know that Shakspeare must have done so. From the quantity which Spenser wrote, we must conclude that he also did so; as well as Petrarch and Dante. It is a fact also that Johnson did so. I have reason to believe, from some manuscript copy which I have seen of the "Edinburgh Review," that Jeffrey does so. While we stay to polish and labour, the freshness

of our ideas are lost. This is my deliberate opinion; and much and firmly as I have been opposed in it, I am every day more strongly convinced of its accuracy. It has been said to me that the public disapprove of it, because it does not show sufficient respect to their judgment. I cannot understand this: the public do not inquire into the process of a production; they only judge by its effect: and I am sure that where a composition is laboured, all the natural association of ideas is broken.

In the walks of imagination and sentiment, nothing artificial and laboured has ever been valued, or remembered long; and nothing natural and fresh, even if not very strong, has often been forgotten. Secondary geniuses, and those who have only mediocrity of talent, almost always resort to artifice.

I cannot too often repeat that the principle of inventive imagination, as applied to poetry and prose-romance, appears to me to be very much mistaken by books of common criticism, and by the popular cry. Extravagance is so far from being a proof of genius, that it is a proof of the contrary. It is a great proof of genius to invent combinations, out of which may arise natural and strong moral emotion;—to produce collisions, out of which is struck sublime and affecting fire in the unsophisticated but buried energies of the human bosom. This is the instructive spell of

high and magical fiction: less has been done in this way, than might have been expected. I cannot approve of the generality of modern novels, which in scarce any degree come within this definition. In my youthful days I could read them; at present they are a nauseous task, which I cannot get through. In old age the taste becomes fastidious, and the digestion difficult. But still high moral truths, exhibited with eloquence and force, never fail to interest.

It is, perhaps, vain arrogance to hope that one can produce any thing that will last beyond the day;—yet I confess that such is my ambition! Scarce one in a hundred of the vast annual productions of the press enjoys this good fortune: they open, bloom, wither, close, and die — all within a few months! What then are these powers, which can throw forth essence of permanent life?

And now that I am about once more to commit myself to the caprice and mercy of public opinion, —with whatever confidence I have written,—I begin to tremble. A hundred mouths will be open to exclaim, that I have said too little, or too much; while others will assert, that I only tell what I have told twenty times before. All must be endured, when once we have entered into the career of literary service. Of criticism I cannot at once shield myself against the darts, so far as at the first moment to bear them without emotion; — but I have so far got a command over myself as

gradually to calm my bosom. I have no belief that I have said any thing absolutely new; if it were so, indeed, I should suspect its truth: it is sufficient if I say it with force and freshness, and do not borrow it, but derive it from my own internal convictions; that is, if my evidence is primary, and not hearsay.

If what I have said is individual, and will apply to nobody but myself, then it is of little value. Fearful minds never generalize; they do not venture to go beyond the particular case. Observe how rarely judges venture to lay down the general principle of law, and how guardedly they keep the decision to the particular case! This is an exemplification of the rarity of great and comprehensive talents.

If I can be proved to have any where represented any thing,—if I have told a garbled tale,—if ever through delusion I have put myself in a false light, then I will not complain of the contempt which I shall bring on myself. I have not told all I might, out of delicacy to others, who deserve no delicacy; but I admit that I have sometimes had great difficulty to control my pen on these points: nor will I promise that I shall always practise the same reserve. I have seen more fraud, and villany, and ingratitude, and extortion, and rapacity, than even novels have ever represented, and than would be considered to keep within decent probability even in the licence

of fiction. I have even been told by impartial, experienced, able, and honourable men, that it was a duty I owed to the public to expose these things. Hitherto I have so far governed my indignation and my wrath as to decline this exposure.

It has always been my opinion and my feeling that, in common biographies, those summaries of the delineation of the character of the person memorialized, with which they almost always conclude, are vapid, and teach us nothing. They deal in vague, general terms, going in a commonplace way through almost all the moral and intellectual virtues, and ascribing each successively to their hero: they have nothing of precision or discrimination in them: they have no shading or tinting, and convey to us no distinct impression of any feature, quality, or faculty. No genius ever arose, whose character was tame, and powers and gifts equally proportioned. Warmth and energy will always lead to occasional excesses; and we are never interested in the delineation of a perfect being because we do not believe it. For this reason Richardson's portrait of Sir Charles Grandison is tiresome, and awakens no sympathy; while even the profligate Lovelace excites intense curiosity and emotion.

By the endeavour through a long life to embody in language elevated thoughts, and refined and pathetic sentiments,—which others may have

equally thought and felt, yet have not had the courage or practice to bring out,—I consider that I have contributed

To raise the fancy, and to mend the heart.

I aim to strengthen the hopes of younger minds against the fear of the approaches of old age, by assuring them, with the utmost sincerity, that in the midst of privations, neglects, calumnies, and tremendous injuries, I have the conviction that life is yet altogether joyous to me,—perhaps more satisfactory and even delightful than in the effervescence of youth and strength of mature manhood. My eye is as delighted with the grandeur and variety of inanimate nature, and my heart is as open to all the virtues and friendships of human society. I boast that I am not deficient in the magnanimity of moral courage. I have calmly stood tremendous shocks, from which they who have faced without trembling the onset of the most furious battle would have shrunk; and I have passed, by the aid of an unswerving spirit, over pits and mines which would have subdued the hearts of the stoutest warriors.

Of the little passions which tormented me in my junior days, in common with the multitude, I have overcome the greater part. I believe that I am mild, well-wishing, still warm and energetic, with a glowing imagination and a trembling heart; not unenlarged in my views of society and human

nature; ready to be pleased; melting to kindness; visionary as a child, yet not unskilled in life; more ductile than becomes my years; more solitary than is consistent with worldly wisdom.

"Oh!" my traducers will exclaim, "what a fanciful picture he has drawn of himself!—how unlike the original!—Surly, stern, misanthropic, captious, contradictory, furious, confused, moody, melancholy, querulous, arrogant, vain, awkward, dull, pusillanimous, a lover of show, recklessly expensive, avid of titles and rank, and aspiring to all employments without any regard to his fitness for them;"—and all sorts of other degrading epithets. Some day these calumnies will be forgotten. *Le bon temps viendra!* Lord Byron took an odd mode of getting rid of detractions and obloquies by exaggerating them, and then laughing them to scorn. Perhaps Rousseau did the same.

The moment is arrived when I must close, and leave the consequences of these dangerous and uncertain volumes to their fate.

Geneva, May, 1834.

THE END.

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